

INSPECTION REPORT

**WODENSBOROUGH COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY
COLLEGE**

Wednesbury

LEA area: Sandwell

Unique reference number: 104006

Headteacher: Mr K Ellis

Lead inspector: Mrs C Worthington

Dates of inspection: 22nd – 25th March 2004

Inspection number: 259305

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: Secondary
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 11 - 18
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 1190

School address: Hydes Road
Wednesbury
West Midlands
Postcode: WS10 0DR

Telephone number: (0121) 556 4951
Fax number: (0121) 556 0134

Appropriate authority: The governing body
Chairman of governors: Colin Hancox (vice chairman)

Date of previous inspection: 27th April 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Wodensborough is a larger than average sized mixed comprehensive school with a very small sixth form, afforded specialist school status as a technology college. It draws its pupils mainly from the local area, which is one of social deprivation. There are over one hundred more boys than girls. Eighty-one per cent are white British; others are mostly of Asian or Caribbean origin. All but two pupils use English as their first language. The percentage known to be eligible for free school meals (29.6) is higher than in other schools. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs (15) is about average; of the 14 in the designated unit or enhanced provision, most have dyslexia, some have hearing impairment. In the main school a further 2.5 per cent have statements for severe or moderate learning difficulty, which is above average. The incidence of pupil mobility is higher than in most schools. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below average. The school takes part in the Excellence in Cities initiative and the TCT value added club. It has several awards, won between 2000 and 2003: Artsmark, Charter Mark, Education Extra, Investor in People, Schools Achievement Award, and Sportsmark.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20609	Carol Worthington	Lead inspector	
9163	Geoffrey Humphrey	Lay inspector	
2059	Susan Cameron	Team inspector	Mathematics
12121	Jack Mallinson	Team inspector	English
18076	Howard Dodd	Team inspector	Science
30518	Michael Johnson	Team inspector	Art
14841	Michael Duffey	Team inspector	History
32252	Deborah Wring	Team inspector	French
7222	Alan Watson	Team inspector	Music
18755	Roger Whittaker	Team inspector	Physical education
18673	Richard Wilkins	Team inspector	Religious education
5714	Frances Thornton	Team inspector	Special educational needs
32672	Stephen Hammond-Evans	Team inspector	Design and technology
8632	Derrick Beer	Team inspector	Geography; citizenship
19295	Peter Wall	Team inspector	Business education
3843	Graham Cooper	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
4474	Ian Punter	Team inspector	Design and technology
17171	Mary Last	Team inspector	Special educational needs
15277	Christopher Vidler	Team inspector	Vocational education

The inspection contractor was:

Tribal PPI
Barley House
Oakfield Grove
Clifton
Bristol
BS8 2BN

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 637 833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

Page

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

The curriculum

Care, guidance and support

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

PROVISION FOR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Wodensborough is a **good school** led very well by the headteacher and his management team. The school pays excellent attention to inclusion so all its pupils are able to learn to the best of their ability. They themselves show very good attitudes to learning and behave very well. The quality of teaching is good and pastoral care is outstanding. Despite the school's best efforts, attendance is unsatisfactory. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher's excellent clarity of vision and very high aspirations.
- Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is very good and standards are rising, but in Years 10 and 11 standards are not as high as they should be.
- The school provides a very innovative and nationally recognised vocational curriculum for older pupils.
- Procedures for staff recruitment, training and development are excellent.
- Provision for the care, welfare, health and safety of pupils is excellent.
- Unsatisfactory attendance has an adverse effect on pupils' learning, particularly in Year 11.
- Very good provision is made for moral education and excellent provision for social development.
- Provision for pupils with dyslexia and hearing impairment is very good.
- Community relations, especially related to technology college status, are very good.
- Governors' understanding of the sixth form is unsatisfactory.

Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. All key issues have been successfully addressed, except that attendance has not improved, even though all the measures recommended in the previous inspection report have been carried out. Standards are improving steadily in Years 7 to 9 and the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is more relevant to the pupils. Provision for information and communication technology is much better. Leadership and management are now very good; provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education has developed with consequent improvement in pupils' attitudes. The school is now in a good position to improve further.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	-	E	E	D

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

Standards in the National Curriculum tests in 2003 at the end of Year 9 were **below average** in English and science and well below average in mathematics, but have been steadily rising in science and mathematics over the last three years. Compared with results in similar schools, they were well above average in English and science and average in mathematics. At the end of Year 11, standards were well below the national average overall in GCSE and GNVQ examinations; they are below the average of similar schools, but have risen slightly this year. Standards observed during the inspection were below average in many subjects including English and mathematics, but in science they have improved to be average by Year 9. They are also average throughout the school in religious education, art, physical education, drama and design and technology and in ICT by the end of Year 11. **Achievement is good** overall and very good in Years 7 to 9, since pupils enter the school well below average and do very well in comparison with similar schools. Too few students in the first year of the sixth form entered examinations for valid comparisons to be made with national results.

The **attitudes** of pupils towards their learning, their interest and engagement in their work and their behaviour are **very good**. The learning attitudes and behaviour of students in the sixth form are **good**. **Attendance** is **unsatisfactory** throughout the school. The punctuality for those who do attend is **satisfactory**. Provision for pupils' **spiritual, moral, social and cultural development** is **good** overall, with strengths in moral and social education.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good** overall and often very good and sometimes excellent, though a very small proportion - mostly in lessons given by unqualified teachers in Years 7 to 9 - is unsatisfactory. The curriculum is **satisfactory** in Years 7 to 9 and **very good** in Years 10 and 11 where provision is innovative through personalised plans. The 'power play' initiative ensures that all pupils' time in the classroom is fully focused on learning. The effort to provide a curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils has been recognised nationally as an example of good practice. The care and support afforded to pupils in the main school and students in the sixth form is **excellent**. It is clearly evident that the relationships and trust between pupils and staff are also **excellent**. The advice and guidance provided for pupils are **very good**. The school has **very good** health and safety and child protection procedures. The views of pupils are valued and acted upon.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are **very good**. The clear system of line management and very good relationships ensure that teamwork is very effective amongst all staff. Governance is satisfactory. The governors are very supportive and have a sound knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses, but they do not have a firm grasp of the challenges being faced in promoting a new, non-viable sixth form. Governors provide good support to special educational needs and additional funding is spent well. The school's educational priorities are supported through very good financial management and strategic planning. There are excellent procedures for staff recruitment, training and development.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils alike hold positive views about the school. They are pleased with its inclusive nature and find all staff genuinely caring. Inspectors agree. They like the vocational curriculum. Parents would like to see better use made of the children's planner and improved communication.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve attendance, particularly of pupils in Year 11.
- Raise standards all round, but especially in Years 10 and 11.
- Identify the post-16 needs of students and provide courses to meet these needs to enable students to succeed.
- Improve the image of the sixth form, giving students more appropriate accommodation and a higher profile.
- Build on the good work done in improving basic literacy skills in Years 7 to 9 and extend this to older pupils.
- Improve standards of basic numeracy so that pupils are not held back, particularly in practical vocational courses.
- The governing body must give more consideration to the sixth form and either ensure its viability or drop it.

THE SIXTH FORM AT WODENSBOROUGH COMMUNITY TECHNOLOGY COLLEGE

This currently caters for 22 students who follow mostly vocational courses and GCSE retakes

The sixth form is in its second year of existence. It was set up at the local authority's initiation in order to address the very poor staying on rate after the age of 16 in Sandwell. It is technically in a consortium with three other providers, but so far, no students from these institutions are on courses provided by Wodensborough (although Wodensborough students go elsewhere in the consortium). The numbers of students in the sixth form have been consistently low because the school has been unable to provide the combinations of subjects that students wish to take. Some students have inevitably left. Some entered their sixth form course with grades too low to be successful in it; in vocational science, for example, seven started the course and now only two remain. Out of 90 projected sixth form students, 40 started the year and now only 22 remain.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is not viable in its present form. Although it caters satisfactorily for students who are present, there are not enough of them and numbers are falling, not rising. Despite careful thought and planning devoted to building on the school's strengths in its vocational and specialist college provision to provide courses that other local sixth form centres do not, the school does not receive enough support from external sources to be able to realise this aim successfully. The sixth form brochure is a poor document that contains the rival claims of different schools with no evidence of collaboration, such as specialisation in particular forms of provision. In the examinations students sat in 2003, most were successful, but there were too few to make valid national comparisons. Students' attitude to work is satisfactory. Some are keen, achieving well and likely to achieve their target grades but others have low aspirations, behaviour problems or poor attendance and the drop-out rate from courses is excessive. Students achieve well in the courses they complete through good teaching and guidance. Leadership and management are satisfactory.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Good quality teaching.
- Students achieve very well in business education.
- Attendance is unsatisfactory.
- The sixth form centre is too isolated.
- The innovative curriculum in Years 10 and 11 does not extend into the sixth form.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Provision in English is satisfactory . Students are well taught and achieve satisfactorily.
Mathematics	Provision in mathematics is good . Students achieve well because of good teaching.
Science	Provision in science is good but not viable because there are too few students.
Information and communication technology	Provision is good though accommodation is rather cramped. Students work independently and make good progress because of good teaching.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in art and design is satisfactory . Teaching and learning are satisfactory.
Business	Provision is good . Students are well taught and achieve very well on the AVCE course.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The school provides **very good** support and guidance for students in the sixth form. They receive high quality counselling regarding their progress and achievement in their sixth form courses. They are very well advised and supported when choosing the next phase in their academic or vocational education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management of the sixth form are **satisfactory** overall. The head of sixth form is not a member of the senior management team and the school has no tradition of post-16 education. Expectations are, therefore, not as consistent as they should be. The governors' awareness of the financial risks inherent in promoting a non-viable sixth form is not strong and they acknowledge this. The principles of best value, so very apparent in dealings in the main school, have not been sufficiently well applied.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Although some students were disappointed with the lack of provision for all the courses they had been promised, especially for sports, most were positive about sixth form provision. They much appreciate the friendly atmosphere, good relationships and the care and support for their studies that they receive from teachers and they find the continuous assessment of their courses very helpful to their progress.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards are below average in the main school and in the sixth form. Achievement is good in the main school and satisfactory in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good achievement in the 2003 National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds.
- Standards are well below average at GCSE.
- The school pays great attention to improving literacy.
- ICT skills are undeveloped in some subjects.

Commentary

1. The school's performance in the 2003 National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds was below the national average but compared with their results when they were 11, they did very well, particularly in English and science, showing very good achievement overall. The school adds considerable value to pupils' attainment during Years 7 to 9 and standards have been rising steadily over the past three years, especially in science and mathematics. This is because the school has worked hard to provide extra tuition to enable pupils who come in to Year 7 with below average grades to achieve standards closer to the average and teachers and classroom assistants have adopted useful features of the National Strategy for Key Stage 3 in class, which has been a valuable aid to improving achievement.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	31.9 (31.4)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	32.4 (30.4)	35.4 (34.7)
science	32.2 (29.8)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 204 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. The GCSE results for 2003 were well below the national average but below those of similar schools, showing improvement from 2002. The school does not enter all its pupils for the GCSE examination; it has introduced a worthwhile alternative curriculum for many of its pupils who do much better with the more structured assessment system in vocational courses. Many are better motivated by learning in a workplace environment, made possible by the school's innovative range of alternatives. The GCSE results are also badly affected by the high absentee rate in Year 11, because many pupils either do not come in for examinations or do not complete coursework. Many of these pupils came into school in Year 9 from a local school which closed and despite the school's best efforts, were not well motivated.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	30 (29)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	72 (78)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	94 (95)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	26 (34.7)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 205 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. Current standards are below average in both key stages, but improving due to good teaching. Pupils continue to enter the school with well below average standards, but in Years 7 to 9 they are those who have chosen the school as their first choice for secondary education. Many of the pupils in Year 11 are those who came to Wodensborough after their chosen school closed. There is not the degree of absence elsewhere in the school that is prevalent in Year 11 and pupils' achievement in some subjects, such as science, geography and art, is better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. The achievement of those who are doing vocational courses is generally good or better. They are well motivated and attendance on these courses is good.
4. Overall the achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good. In some specialist lessons achievement is very good because teaching is very good. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in most subjects as a result of good teaching and the good support they receive from teachers and support staff.
5. In English, the department emphasises the development of literacy through clear, accurate writing, but skills in speaking and listening suffer from a lack of opportunity. Standards of literacy are improving due to the school's effective implementation of the National Literacy Strategy in Years 7 and 8 in particular, but poor literacy still holds back the standards in some subjects of older pupils who have not had the benefit of this. Especially good development of literacy occurs in the extension classes for Year 7 pupils held before school which are very well attended and literacy makes a positive contribution to standards in religious education and science, but holds back pupils' progress in some, such as history.
6. Numeracy develops satisfactorily although there is at present little planned into schemes of work and the National Numeracy Strategy is not yet being effectively coordinated. Some of the low ability pupils in design and technology are hampered in attempting more precise work by their lack of accurate measurement.
7. Pupils' ICT skills are insufficiently developed in all subjects, though this is a priority for development in the school. In French and science, ICT is used well and it is a very strong feature in design and technology. Lack of access to computers prevents their regular use in the English and humanities departments.

Sixth form

8. There are no examination results that can be compared with those of other schools because the numbers taking examinations are far too small for meaningful comparison. Most students are on one-year retake courses and only five stayed on to take their vocational ICT, science or business education courses into Year 13. In 2003, students on business vocational courses did best. Those doing science and ICT passed their examinations, but over half the GCSE re-sits failed to attain a C grade. Although 40 students enrolled in the current sixth form, half of them are no longer in the school. Some went on to find jobs; others were unable to continue because of entry qualifications too low to enable them to cope with the course and others just did not attend. The few who remain are achieving well and are expected to gain worthwhile qualifications in science, business studies, ICT and the English and mathematics re-sits.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance of pupils in the main school and of students in the sixth form is **unsatisfactory**. The punctuality of those who do attend is **satisfactory**. In the main college the attitudes of pupils towards their learning, their interest and engagement in their work and their behaviour are **very good**. The learning attitudes and behaviour of students in the sixth form are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils demonstrate very good attitudes towards their learning; sixth form students' attitudes are good.
- Behaviour is very good; pupils and students show respect and courtesy towards others.
- The quality of relationships throughout the school is very good.
- The attendance of older pupils from Year 9 upwards is unsatisfactory and adversely affects achievement.
- The low aspirations of a sizable minority of sixth form students restrict their achievement.
- The lack of willingness by sixth formers to be enterprising, take responsibility and act as role models within the main school.

Commentary

9. Attendance is unsatisfactory overall, but that of pupils in Years 7 and 8 is satisfactory and in line with the national average. The full benefit from a substantial investment in an electronic registration system which will eventually provide instant data on pupils' attendance at the start of each lesson has yet to be fully realised and attendance has not improved since the previous inspection. The planned procedures for following up on absence are rigorous, involving first day contact with parents and carers, but staff shortages have made it difficult to maintain this programme over recent months. There are well-established procedures for supporting pupils with poor attendance and encouraging them back into school. Overall the current procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance and gaining the support of parents, are satisfactory. The punctuality of those who do attend is satisfactory.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	9.3	School data	2.9
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

10. Pupils' attitudes towards their learning and interest and engagement in their work, are very good. Pupils say they are happy and enjoy attending the college and find the work interesting and challenging. There are very good relationships throughout with a high level of mutual respect between pupils and their teachers, who themselves demonstrate a great sense of camaraderie. All pupils, including those from other cultural and ethnic minority backgrounds, are respected and fully included in the life and work of the school. Teachers use effective methods to engage and motivate pupils and stimulate their interest in learning. Overall pupils' attitudes and behaviour, judged as good in the previous inspection, have improved and are now very good.
11. The implementation of the behaviour policy is consistent and successful. A small amount of bullying occurs but the school's response is rigorous and effective. In order to maintain expected standards of behaviour, the school takes a firm approach to the use of exclusion. The application of this sanction is considered to be fair by pupils. Although there have been four permanent exclusions in the current year the overall rate of exclusions is falling.

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No. of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	953	59	0
White – Irish	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	42	5	0
Mixed – White and Black African	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	11	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	8	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	75	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	30	1	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	30	4	0
Black or Black British – African	2	2	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2	0	0
Parents preferred not to say	10	0	0

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

12. There are very good opportunities for pupils to take the initiative and show responsibility. Pupils take very good advantage of the wide range of extra-curricular activities both before and after the normal school day, in some cases participating in extra GCSE courses. The school council provides an effective platform from which pupils can express their views and contribute to the life and work of the school. The council also provides a consultative link between the school management and the wider pupil body. Many older pupils become junior sports leaders working with the feeder primary schools to stimulate interest and improve the sports skills of younger pupils. For a number of years, pupils in Year 11 have organised their own end of year 'proms' which have been highly successful events to which their mentors, teachers and other support staff have been invited as an expression of their gratitude for the help they have given.
13. The special educational needs department is central to the school's ethos of inclusion. The department responds well to individual needs and creates an environment where pupils want to succeed. When pupils are withdrawn from lessons, their attitudes and behaviour are very good. Personal development is cultivated effectively in these specialist lessons
14. Provision for pupils' spiritual development has improved since the previous inspection and is now satisfactory. The school plans well to ensure that over time the weekly year assemblies have Christian and other religious and spiritual themes. On other mornings, tutor time provides pupils with opportunities for reflection on a *Thought for the Day*. However, the quality of delivery is uneven and more careful monitoring is needed to ensure consistently good practice. All subjects now plan their schemes of work to provide opportunities for pupils' spiritual development in lessons. During the inspection, good practice was observed in, for example, religious education and geography.
15. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good. The school has clear values, based on respect and caring for the individual, that inform all aspects of its daily life and work. Pupils give practical expression to the values of caring in outstanding support for a very wide range

of charities. Pupils have been involved in drawing up the code of conduct through their school council and feel a sense of responsibility for it. Their moral awareness and maturity are evident in their very good behaviour and attitudes. Teachers set them excellent examples. Many subjects, such as the much improved personal and social education (PHSE) programme, provide pupils with very good opportunities to explore ethical issues.

16. Provision for pupils' social development is excellent. The school does much to raise pupils' self-esteem through public recognition of their achievements. There is a culture of praise. Pupils have excellent opportunities to develop their social skills, through, for example, residential experiences, field trips and the very wide range of extra-curricular activities, clubs and sports teams. They are also given opportunities to learn to take responsibility and develop leadership skills, ranging from serving as peer mentors, stewards or school council representatives, to interviewing applicants for teaching posts. Lessons afford pupils very good opportunities for developing skills of collaborative working and for exploring contemporary social issues.
17. Provision for pupils' cultural development is good. There are good opportunities for them to develop skills in the creative and expressive arts, through, for example, music, drama and annual productions. Pupils' appreciation of their own cultural heritage is developed through visits to theatres, museums and art galleries. Their understanding of other European cultures is deepened through study and recreational visits abroad. Much more is done than at the previous inspection to raise pupils' awareness of the contribution of cultures other than the Western European to the development of 21st century civilisation and to develop their appreciation of the multicultural richness and diversity of contemporary British society.

Sixth form

18. Attendance in the sixth form is unsatisfactory and for many students this has an adverse impact on their achievement. The punctuality of those who do attend is satisfactory. Students' learning attitudes are good. They work hard and demonstrate an interest in the courses they are attending. A minority of sixth form students have low aspirations and this restricts their achievement. Behaviour is good, but because there is such a small number of students attending sixth form courses, they demonstrate some reluctance to take on whole school responsibilities and to present themselves as role models to other pupils in the main school. A sixth form committee provides leadership for a number of charity initiatives and acts as a consultative group with the head of the department and senior management.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are good overall, though a very small proportion of lessons – mostly lessons given by unqualified teachers in Years 7 to 9 - is unsatisfactory. The curriculum is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11 where provision is innovative. The curriculum is unsatisfactory in the sixth form.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall throughout the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The percentage of very good and excellent lessons was highest in Years 10 and 11.
- Some teaching by unqualified staff is unsatisfactory.
- Teachers make extraordinary efforts to engage and motivate pupils by a wide variety of methods.
- The 'power play' initiative is very effective.
- Teaching assistants play an important part in helping every pupil to learn.
- Relationships are very good.

- Assessment is good.

Commentary

- Teaching and learning are good throughout the school. Of the 147 lessons seen, 71 per cent were good or better and 29 per cent were very good or better. The unsatisfactory lessons were mainly in Years 7 to 9 and were given by temporary and unqualified teachers in mathematics and ICT. The percentage of very good and excellent lessons was highest in Years 10 and 11.
- Whilst there are many well-qualified staff, there is also a significant number of trainees and unqualified staff. Teachers have satisfactory expertise overall in specific subject knowledge and planning is good. A very wide variety of teaching methods are used, which motivate pupils, who are targeted towards their best ways of learning. This ensures that pupils build up knowledge and skills effectively. Teachers have had good training; teaching is regularly monitored and evaluated and good practice shared. It is for these reasons that teaching is so effective. The teaching of the experienced, permanent staff in mathematics and ICT is good and the school has more experienced staff joining them at the beginning of next term, making trainees supernumerary.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 147 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
7 (4.7%)	39 (26.5%)	60 (41%)	33 (22.4%)	6 (4%)	1 (0.7%)	1 (0.7%)

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons are seen.

- The school's excellent induction and staff development procedures result in most newly qualified teachers doing very well and quickly producing lessons of good quality, which enable pupils to learn well. This is particularly strong in ICT. The school has focused developments on improving teaching and learning throughout the curriculum and this is evident in the extended range of teaching and learning methods observed in all subjects.
- Pupils enter the school with well below average attainment and many are from homes where education is not valued. It is to the school's credit that all teachers make extraordinary efforts to motivate and engage pupils. This starts before pupils get into class; teachers meet and greet pupils at the door and ensure that they settle and are ready to work when they sit down. The 'power play' initiative is very effective; barriers to learning, such as incorrect dress or noisy behaviour, are effectively broken by all staff in the grounds and corridors. This enables teachers to teach and pupils to learn as soon as they enter the classroom where teachers continue to insist on high standards of behaviour. These methods ensure that pupils apply themselves well to their work and spend their time productively.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. Teachers encourage their pupils and engage them very well in their learning. This enables most pupils to enjoy their learning and, because they know that teachers value their contributions to lessons, the majority work well both independently and collaboratively, particularly in practical subjects, such as design and technology and science.
- Teachers are quick to take up initiatives such as those embodied in the National Strategy for Key Stage 3 and this is having a good effect. The three-part lesson engages pupils by the clarity in which lessons objectives are initially communicated, worked upon and reiterated to check learning at the end. This is particularly effective in ICT and French and evidently being used successfully in most other subjects.
- The teaching and learning of pupils with special educational needs is good. The teaching of pupils with a high level of need in special groups is very good and that of pupils in subject

lessons is good. Many have levels of literacy and numeracy that are well below average for their age. With carefully planned support by teachers, these pupils learn as well as others in the class. Teaching assistants are well used by teachers and make a good contribution to pupils' learning. Teachers effectively communicate their planning to their assistants who evaluate the learning of the pupils they are guiding. This enables the teacher to take the learning of all pupils into consideration when planning the next lesson.

26. Through comprehensive training, the school has ensured that all teachers and support staff match methods and resources to pupils and are guided by individual education plans. Good communication and assessment ensure that these are used effectively to help pupils learn. All pupils have equal opportunity to learn and do well. Gifted and talented pupils have extension work and some projects aimed directly at them which offer them even greater challenges than those put to the rest of the class.
27. Assessment is good. There are consistent and effective procedures in place for assessing work and all staff are clearly focused on how well pupils are doing. The introduction of self-assessment tick-sheets and homework booklets is already having a positive impact in science, for example. Marking is constructive in most subjects and pupils are set targets for improvement. This is better in Years 10 and 11 where examination criteria are known to pupils and they themselves know how to improve their grades. The very clear measures and continuous assessment of GNVQ and other vocational courses are much appreciated by older pupils and the sixth form students because they can see quite easily how to do better. In Years 7 to 9, however, teachers do not use National Curriculum levels enough to guide pupils on how to improve; this is particularly so in French and art.
28. There are good systems in place in science and geography to monitor performance. All departments have access to the school's system for tracking progress and most make good use of it to set targets that are challenging for pupils. It is also used well by senior management to track the progress of groups of pupils, such as those with special educational needs, those from difference ethnic backgrounds, and the relative performance of boys and girls and set them challenging targets.
29. Pupils are becoming regularly involved in helping to assess their own work, such as in ICT where they complete their own record sheets and have them validated by staff.

Sixth form

25. Teaching and learning are good. Of the 11 lessons seen, 73 per cent were good or better; none was less than satisfactory. In all subjects, teachers have good expertise and high expectations. The relationships are particularly good, resulting in a positive atmosphere of mutual respect. Most teachers know their students well from having taught them lower down the school and this has a positive influence. Most students interviewed were very pleased with the vocational subjects' structured assessment procedures, which show them how to improve their grades. They also receive very good guidance from staff.

The curriculum

The curriculum for pupils in the main school is **good** and meets the needs of all pupils. In the sixth form, the overall quality of the curriculum for students in Years 12 and 13 is **unsatisfactory**. The accommodation and learning resources are **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A broad and balanced main school curriculum which meets the needs of all pupils.
- An innovative vocational curriculum is planned for all pupils in Year 10 and Year 11.
- There are good opportunities for pupils to experience the world of work.
- There is a good range of extra-curricular activities.

- Lack of opportunity inhibits pupils' study of modern foreign languages in Year 10 and Year 11.
- The newly established sixth form is very small and offers a very limited range of courses.
- Although class sizes are small, business courses are well planned to meet the needs of students.
- Partnership with other schools to improve the curriculum on offer is limited.
- Advice and guidance to students are good.
- Although the sixth form has specialist accommodation it is poorly sited and not equipped to promote independent learning.

Commentary

26. The quality and range of learning opportunities are satisfactory for pupils in Years 7 to 9 and very good for those in Years 10 and 11. The curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the interests, needs and aptitudes of all pupils. As a result, pupils make good progress as they move through the school.
27. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, including the provision of religious education and collective worship. Courses are being continually reviewed and updated to ensure that they are relevant and interesting. New requirements for citizenship have been introduced, mainly through the well structured scheme for personal, social and health lessons that are taught by form tutors. English and mathematics courses have been completely rewritten in line with the National Strategy for Key Stage 3 and drama is included as a separate subject.
28. The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is very well thought out to reduce the possibility of disaffection and provide pathways to employment and further training. All pupils study a core curriculum of English, mathematics, science, physical education, religious education, design and technology and personal, social and health education. A very good variety of vocational courses are provided for all pupils, including motor vehicle entry courses, plumbing and childcare. The effort to provide a curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils has been recognised nationally as an example of good practice. The school has decided to drop the requirement for compulsory modern foreign languages in this phase of education after discussion with the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority in advance of the greater flexibility offered to schools from September 2004.
29. The school works very hard to ensure that pupils take appropriate courses and all pupils and their parents have the opportunity to discuss the range of options that can be studied in Years 10 and 11. The school has excellent links with the local Connexions service and has developed a well-structured programme to guide pupils in their decisions. Connexions advisers provide a useful contribution to the personal, social and health education programme (PSHE) for all pupils. Targeted groups are given additional support to raise their aspirations. This year, the programme will focus on Afro-Caribbean boys.

Example of outstanding practice

There are a number of special programmes and initiatives to help those who lack confidence or who find independent learning and concentration difficult.

A thinking skills programme for pupils in Years 9 and 10 is designed to help them fulfil their mental and intellectual potential through the development of their information processing, reasoning, enquiry, creative thinking and evaluation skills. The programme is also designed to help teachers plan lessons that meet the needs of pupils with widely different learning styles. The school also provides highly motivational 'Talking Achievement' sessions for selected pupils in Year 10 who need greater confidence in order to meet and challenge their full potential.

30. The curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The specialist provision for pupils with high levels of need who are withdrawn from lessons is very good because it is well planned to provide a broad range of opportunities carefully adapted to meet pupils' learning requirements. The provision for literacy and PSHE is stronger than the

provision for numeracy. The provision for pupils within subjects is good. The commitment and expertise of the head of special educational needs and the very good support given to teaching staff ensure that pupils' individual needs are met effectively. Pupils with special educational needs are valued and are included well within the school. Inclusion is very good. Extra-curricular provision is very good. The specialist accommodation is very attractive and provides a welcoming environment, which is valued by pupils. Resources are very good and are used well to meet the needs of pupils.

31. The small number of hearing-impaired pupils are well supported to ensure they have effective access to the curriculum. All teachers have been trained to understand and provide for their needs and signers are available where needed. The school has a unit for a small number of pupils with specific learning difficulties which provides very good support and teaching for these pupils, ensuring that they make good progress and can work effectively alongside pupils in mainstream lessons.
32. The school has identified a group of gifted and talented pupils and provides a wide range of activities to enable them to explore the opportunities that could be open to them, for example through university summer schools. An innovative development is the introduction of a brain-based accelerated learning course for low ability pupils. Gifted and talented pupils are now taking the course and will be used to tutor other pupils.
33. The school provides a good range of information and advice relating to careers education. Pupils with special educational needs have a dedicated leavers' programme which increases their confidence in life skills and the world of work. Work experience makes a very positive contribution to pupils' development. It is very well organised and almost all teachers support individual pupils in their placements. The school has been successful in increasing the number of pupils completing their work experience course - now 93 per cent - thus extending this opportunity to almost all pupils.
34. The school also involves large numbers of pupils in projects and activities to heighten their aspirations and increase self-confidence by being placed in situations where they need to take responsibility and show initiative. Last year, the school team won the Barnardo's mini-enterprise project involving pupils in business and financial planning to ensure the successful completion of a building project.
35. There is a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities for all pupils and take-up is good. Further opportunities for revision and booster classes are provided in addition to clubs and activities.
36. The school has continued to develop the curriculum since the last inspection, continually reviewing and developing its provision to meet the needs of all pupils. Curriculum provision continues to be good and inclusive; all pupils are enabled to make the most of their secondary education and prepare for adult life.
37. Accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory overall. Some of the vocational courses are taught off site but accommodation and resourcing for those taught in school are good, for example plumbing and GNVQ courses in business and computer studies. Whilst the classrooms of most departments are grouped together, those used by the English department are dispersed around the school; the learning resource centre (library) is too small and lacks sufficient books to support the full range of the National Curriculum and vocational courses. The provision of textbooks for religious education is unsatisfactory. The ratio of pupils to computers is good, but the computer suites are poorly ventilated and therefore do not provide a comfortable working environment.

Sixth form

38. The school established its sixth form in 2003 at the behest of the local education authority, but has yet to attract and retain sufficient numbers of students to ensure that a broad range of courses can be run. Most students continuing their education after GCSEs prefer to take advantage of the wide choice available in other schools and colleges in the area. The school attempted to provide an adequate range of advanced and vocational courses but is only able to offer retakes in English and mathematics GCSE and vocational courses in business, information and communication technology, science and art. The most popular courses are ICT and business at intermediate and advanced levels and these are well organised to ensure that students develop a good understanding of the business world and possible careers.
39. Attempts are being made to improve local collaborative provision of sixth form courses and the school offers good support and guidance to students, who are made aware of opportunities offered by other schools and colleges. However, despite some curricular co-ordination in the 'Wednesbury Consortium', other schools in the area have not sent students to Wodensborough. The brochure is a poor document that contains the rival claims of different schools with no evidence of collaboration, such as specialisation in particular forms of provision.
40. The sixth form has been provided with its own accommodation which is sited at the entrance to the school but separate from the main buildings. It presents an image of a social area rather than of one dedicated to learning. Although the block is well equipped with computers there is no access to the Internet and resources to encourage independent learning are limited.

Care, guidance and support

The care and support afforded to pupils in the main school and students in the sixth form is **excellent**. It is clearly evident that the relationships and trust between pupils and staff are also **excellent**. The advice and guidance provided for pupils in the main school and students in the sixth form are **very good**. The school has **very good** health and safety and child protection procedures. The views of pupils and students are valued and acted upon.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent standards of care and welfare.
- Very good support and guidance.
- Very good induction arrangements for pupils entering Year 7.
- Excellent relationships and trust between pupils/students and their teachers and support staff.

Commentary

41. The school provides excellent care, support and guidance for its pupils. The pastoral teams create a caring ethos which provides sensitive guidance and support which encourage everyone to work hard and apply their best endeavours in order to fulfil their full potential. The school's whole approach to welfare and guidance is based around the need to match the provision of personal and academic support precisely to the needs of each individual pupil. The quality of relationships throughout the school is a major strength. A high degree of trust between pupils and those who teach or help them to overcome difficulties is clearly evident. Form tutors, mentors and other support staff know their pupils very well and play a key role in monitoring their personal development and anticipating any issues that might present a barrier to their learning or academic fulfilment.
42. The attention given to health and safety is very good. The health and safety policy clearly defines the responsibilities of staff and governors and risk assessment procedures are rigorous and effective. The provision for first aid is very good. Pupils are also taught to use school equipment safely and to take responsibility for their own health and safety, particularly

during practical or sporting activities. There are effective procedures for dealing with child protection issues and staff are well trained and sensitive to the individual needs of all pupils. Links with social services and all other relevant outside agencies are well established.

43. Induction programmes for pupils when they transfer from the feeder primary schools are very good. The receiving head of year, the special education needs co-ordinator and the pupil mentoring team make regular pastoral visits to the primary schools in order to assess the individual needs of the incoming year group. Older pupils engaged in the community sports leadership programme to support sports activities in primary schools and some subject teachers also visit primary schools to teach and support the older pupils prior to transfer.

Example of outstanding practice

In Year 7 a survey is conducted to establish 'Pupils' Attitudes to Self and School' (PASS). The results are analysed on computer using specially developed software.

From the analysis of this survey it can be determined which pupils lack the self esteem and appropriate attitudes to learning that will enable them to succeed and fulfil their potential. From this survey five per cent are identified as high risk (code red) and these pupils are considered likely to become disaffected at some point in the future. Fifteen per cent are considered as medium risk (code amber) and the rest low risk (code green). Intervention strategies are applied immediately to those in the code red zone. Pupils in the code amber zone are more rigorously monitored while pupils in the code green zone are monitored through the normal and established tracking and assessment systems. In this way intervention strategies can be applied to anticipate learning and behaviour problems before they become established and impact on achievement.

44. Pupils are given very good guidance when selecting their option subjects at the end of Year 9. There is a very good range of academic and vocational choices with every pupil opting for at least one accredited vocational course. Very good advice is provided for pupils when they are making decisions about the next phase of their education whether it is for academic or vocational courses. There are very good opportunities for pupils to gain knowledge and experience of business and industry through the wide range of business and vocational courses, careers advice and conventions, special industry events and work experience, which are well organised and available to all pupils at the beginning of Year 11.
45. Pupils are involved in the life and the work of the school and their views and opinions are valued. The school council is an effective consultative link between school management and the wider pupil body. The school also conducts regular inclusion surveys of pupils, teachers, support staff, governors and parents. The support, care and guidance provided by the school have improved significantly since the previous inspection when they were judged to be good compared to now when they are judged to be very good with some excellent features.
46. There are close and trusting relationships between staff and pupils with special educational needs. All staff know the pupils' needs very well and strong systems put in place by the coordinator for special educational needs ensure that there is a good partnership between teachers and support assistants, which strengthen the support provided to individual pupils. There is very effective advice and support for these pupils which helps them to play a full part within the school and plan for their future.

Sixth form

47. The school provides very good support and guidance for students in the sixth form. They receive high quality counselling regarding their progress and achievement in their sixth form courses. The teachers and mentors work hard to inspire and motivate the students and to ensure they complete their programmes of study. The students are very well advised and supported when choosing the next phase in their academic or vocational education. The sixth form student committee provides a very good consultative link between the students, their teachers and the school's senior management team.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership between the school and parents is **good**. Parents have positive views about the school and the opportunities it provides for their children. The involvement of the main school in, and its links with, the wider community are **very good**. The community links of the sixth form are **satisfactory**. The outreach of the main school to other schools and colleges and the extended educational and support programmes provided are **good**. In the sixth form the links to other schools are unsatisfactory in the consortium.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good partnership with parents promoted by the school.
- The very good outreach into the wider community.
- The good and well-established links with other schools and colleges.
- The good quality and range of extended educational and support programmes provided.
- The arrangements for shared provision in the sixth form are not effective.
- Pupils are not given the chance to evaluate their own work.

Commentary

48. The school works hard to engage parents and gain their full co-operation, particularly in relation to pastoral issues and the maintaining of regular attendance by pupils. The school deploys a full time home/school liaison officer whose function is to support pupils and their families where there are circumstances that create barriers to learning or impede regular attendance. Through the pre-inspection meeting and returned questionnaires, parents indicate high levels of satisfaction with most aspects of the school's provision.
49. The quality of information provided about the progress of pupils and other events and matters of interest is good. There are regular half termly newsletters and an established routine of consultation and target setting meetings. There are more frequent parent meetings during Year 7 after transfer from primary school, a very well organised 'options' evening at the end of Year 9 and a 'masterclass' on 'how to help your child revise' for the parents of pupils in Year 11. The school also participates the 'Share Family Learning' project promoted by the 'ContinYou Parentline Plus' charity, providing 'Share' group sessions where parents and carers learn how to support their children's learning at home. Another initiative is a parenting skills programme called 'Wodo Action Supporting Skills' (WASPS), which is run by one of the school's learning mentors. Many aspects of the partnership with parents have been considerably strengthened and enhanced since the previous inspection.
50. There are two reports a year, a full annual report at the end of the academic year and an interim report at the midway point. The full report includes a subject-by-subject summary, indicates pupil effort and attitude and provides the current achievement grade plus a target grade. What is not included is specific guidance on what a pupil needs to do to improve from the current grade to the suggested target grade. The interim report is a 'tick sheet' covering five criteria to summarise achievement and effort. Neither of these provides an opportunity for pupils to undertake any form of self-evaluation.
51. A recently re-formed parent teacher association is beginning to have a positive impact on school-parent relationships and to provide a good consultative link through which parents can strengthen their influence on the range of courses and extra-curricular activities. There are extensive links with the wider community, many of which contribute to the vocational curriculum and provide opportunities for pupils to gain experience in the workplace. The school is engaged in a dialogue with a number of local companies, in some cases gaining sponsorship for specific projects.
52. There are good links with other schools and colleges. Through its technology college status, the school supports the primary schools in the Wednesbury Cluster Group with mathematics,

technology and ICT and through the junior sports leadership programme. There are also a number of joint ventures with other colleges, such as the organisation of support programmes for gifted and talented pupils and participation in the Technology College Steering Group. These ventures are very well managed and effectively enhance the academic and vocational curriculum opportunities available to pupils. Overall the partnership with the community, particularly commerce and industry and with other schools and colleges have been well maintained since the last inspection

53. The special educational needs department is welcoming to parents and makes good efforts to keep them informed about their children's progress. Most parents make regular contact with the special educational needs department when they see the need. Many parents are very supportive and appreciate the contribution of the department to their children's education. A minority of parents do not see the need to attend annual reviews.

Sixth form

54. The school works closely with the parents of students engaged on sixth form courses. The small number of students limits the opportunities for developing effective links with the wider community, but this is satisfactory. The links with other schools and colleges are satisfactory in terms of the agreed provision of courses, but currently the number of pupils from the school entering sixth form courses in other schools and colleges is far greater than the number of pupils entering the school's sixth form for technology-related subjects and courses and in this respect any shared provision is unsatisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good; governance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Outstanding leadership by the headteacher.
- Very good financial management and strategic planning.
- Clear line management and good teamwork amongst staff.
- Excellent procedures for staff recruitment, training and development.
- The sixth form is not financially viable.

Commentary

55. Leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher has outstanding clarity of vision, sense of purpose and high aspirations. He has been in post for almost a year and during that time has motivated staff to share his vision and work together very effectively to make the best provision for the school's pupils. He has been very successful in building a team of senior managers who all fulfil their responsibilities most effectively.
56. The clear system of line management enables all aspects of the school's provision to be thoroughly reviewed and evaluated with the major focus being the achievement of all pupils. The school's commitment to inclusion is total. It excellently promotes equality for all members of the school community and all staff show outstanding concern for their needs, taking their lead from the very good role models presented to them by the headteacher and senior management team.
57. The school development plan is a well-conceived document which is regularly evaluated by the headteacher and other members of senior management. It provides a very good record of the progress that the school is making towards realising its goals. The school's targets are focused firmly on the development of teaching and learning and the raising of attainment for all its pupils.

58. Monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance and provision are carried out in all aspects of its work, including the pastoral system, the special educational needs unit and subject departments. All departments have a comprehensive annual review made by their head of department, line manager and headteacher, which involves a very thorough analysis of standards achieved and the evaluation of teaching and learning through classroom observation. This makes a very good contribution to the development of department teams, identifying areas of weakness and sharing good practice.
59. The school has many teachers who are unqualified and invests heavily and successfully in training graduates from industry or overseas, many of whom leave for promotion elsewhere. The headteacher and governing body work hard to attract new staff and offer an excellent training and development programme. Electronic evaluation and feedback systems are used effectively to ensure that the school receives best value from the courses attended by its teaching staff. It has taken a very positive approach to performance management and procedures are good. Excellent arrangements are in place for the induction of newly qualified teachers and teachers new to the school. The management of the recruitment and retention of teaching staff is very good. The school conducts highly innovative staff development interviews which focus on the personal and career aspirations of each member of staff. This often results in staff attending courses which could be of a recreational or academic nature. Recently, for example, staff have attended guitar lessons, undertaken higher degree programmes and undertaken the NPQH (national professional qualification for headteachers).
60. Leadership of special educational needs is very good. The coordinator has a clear focus on meeting the individual needs of pupils and supporting teachers within the school to share this vision. He leads a strong team and has put in place effective systems, which ensure teachers and support assistants work well together. He has excellent knowledge of the curriculum and has very high teaching skills. He provides a very good role model to other staff and pupils and gives his time to provide support to staff. There is rigorous monitoring of pupils' progress in literacy and personal development; within subjects, there is good monitoring of the performance of special needs pupils. Improvement since the last inspection has been good; pupils' achievement is now good due to increased support in subjects. Governors provide good support to special educational needs and additional funding is spent well.

Sixth form

61. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory overall. The head of sixth form is not a member of the senior management team. The current leadership is having to cope with the past lack of vision, insufficient analysis of the needs of post-16 students and poor marketing of the school's sixth form within the consortium. There is no tradition of post-16 education in the school and, consequently, expectations are not as consistent as they should be. The head of sixth form does not have an office in the sixth form centre, so is not a constant presence among the students.
62. There is a sixth form development plan, which identifies necessary targets to achieve in order to make the consortium viable; some, such as aligning the timetables and school days of the component schools, have already been done and the proposal to offer B-tech courses next year in order to fill a niche in the consortium is being followed up to achieve accreditation. Forty to 50 enquiries have been received from the current Year 11 pupils, but when interviewed by inspectors, the majority said they would be going elsewhere for their sixth form education.
63. Whilst governors have a satisfactory understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the main school provision, their awareness of the financial risks inherent in promoting a non-viable sixth form is not as clearly focused and in this respect their understanding of the challenges being faced is unsatisfactory. The principles of best value, so very apparent in dealings in the main school, have not been sufficiently well applied. Full analysis of students' needs have not been fully addressed. The school is not building on its strengths as a technology college in the proposals for sixth form courses to be run. Governors acknowledge these weaknesses and

intend to concentrate on them as a matter of priority. The very efficient finance officer has ensured that the sixth form does not drain the school's resources overwhelmingly so far, but there is already a very large budget deficit because of the loss of students during the year.

64. The accommodation for the sixth form is satisfactory with adequate space for independent learning. However, it is not immediately obvious as a sixth form centre. The provision has too many leisure facilities and far too small an ICT room which was badly overheated during the spring inspection and has no air-conditioning or provision for lectures. It is a long way from the main building so the sixth form students are not able to play a role as the most senior students in the school. Overall the learning resources are satisfactory and adequately support the limited number of sixth form courses on offer. The school has purchased specialist equipment to enable one science student to study a particular project, which shows the school's good commitment.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4,535,381	Balance from previous year	11,620
Total expenditure	4,499,352	Balance carried forward to the next	47,649
Expenditure per pupil	3,789		

65. Pupils' learning and the school's educational priorities are supported through very good financial management and strategic planning. The spending of funds received for specific purposes such as the standards fund, the capital works associated with the school's development as a technology college and for special educational needs, is in accordance with requirements. The systems for managing finances and the administration of the school and ensuring that the principles of best value are applied are very good. The school provides satisfactory value for money.
66. The sixth form is not a viable unit and does not provide satisfactory value for money. The financial implications of a sixth form that has not achieved viability are being closely monitored and allocated funds rigorously controlled to minimise the impact that the funding deficit, arising from the sixth form provision, has on the main school provision.

PROVISION FOR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN HEARING IMPAIRMENT AND SPECIFIC LEARNING DIFFICULTY

Provision for pupils with hearing impairment or specific learning difficulties is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils are very well taught, highly motivated and make very good progress.
- There is a total commitment to include pupils with special educational needs in all aspects of school life.
- Assessment procedures are very good and promote pupils' awareness of their own learning
- The curriculum meets the needs of all pupils.
- Leadership and management are outstanding and promote the education of pupils with special educational needs as a school priority.

Commentary

67. All pupils make at least good progress during lessons. In the longer term they achieve well and many, particularly those with specific learning difficulties, develop their skills well enough

to enable them to study without further help or support. Where they attend mainstream classes, pupils with dyslexia or hearing impairment achieve in line with their peers. In a Year 9 science class, one such pupil was the first to define the difference between mass and weight. In a Year 8 music lesson, the pupils with special educational needs were indistinguishable from their peers and achieved equally as well.

68. Teaching is very good overall and was excellent in two lessons where exemplary skills were used by the teacher to challenge and motivate pupils to work to the end of the lesson and to finish by discussing what they had learned. In lessons, activities are designed to meet the pupils' individual needs with frequent changes of focus so that they can maintain their concentration. The teacher recognised the stress on just two pupils, for example, when they were using British sign language as their main means of communication; to alleviate this, he added sequencing exercises and vocabulary definitions, including spelling everyday words they would require in the future. Pupils with dyslexia are similarly well supported. They, too, experience a range of activities within their specialist support sessions, including individual computer work on syllables and blending. Paired reading helps them to extend their vocabulary and the quality of their reading aloud is improved by sharing the task with the teacher, who provides a very good role model in expression and clarity. The last few minutes of each lesson are used very well to focus on literacy and achievement in lessons. Pupils are encouraged to say what they have learned by the end of the lesson.
69. The atmosphere for learning within the learning support base is excellent. Staff have created a highly inspirational area for developing pupils' skills by providing a comprehensive range of reference materials with many handy learning tips. However, most impressive is the emphasis on building self-esteem and confidence; teachers promote pupils' positive views of themselves and their awareness of their own learning by hanging their names and achievements on the 'washing line' for all to see. Most popular of all is the throne where pupils have their photographs and details of their achievements permanently recorded in a 'big book'. There are many such excellent examples around the school and in classrooms. Teachers are justifiably pleased with the pupils' achievements and one classroom proudly displays the poetry written by a Year 9 pupil that shows sensitivity to the subject of his brother, with a clear sense of form.
70. Assessment is built into all lessons and there are high expectations that pupils will think carefully about what they have achieved. Checking their own learning helps the teacher to see that their learning outcomes have been met. This was very well illustrated in a language lesson where the pupils were able to give examples of irregular and regular plural forms such as 'child/children', 'die/dice' and 'sheep/sheep'. The school has a good range of information concerning the progress and achievements of its individual pupils. The hearing impaired pupils and those with dyslexia are clearly identified in the school's progress tracking data.
71. The curriculum is extremely well adapted to meet the needs of all pupils. The balance between specialist support within classes and withdrawal work is very effective and includes enhancement through computer programmes and individual literacy work. Extra-curricular activities are also a strength with many trips and residential experiences available to all pupils. The inclusion of pupils with special educational needs is at the heart of the school's purpose and the pupils are accorded due respect and status by everyone. During inspection week, without the help of a teaching assistant, two deaf pupils were on duty at the front reception desk greeting visitors in British sign language.
72. Leadership and management by the special educational needs coordinator are outstanding. He is highly skilled and has excellent relationships with staff and pupils. He leads by fine example as an imaginative, energetic and exemplary teacher, who elicits maximum response and effort from pupils and staff alike.

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 and French were inspected in full. Media studies GCSE was sampled and one lesson was observed. Pupils made satisfactory progress and the boys in the group were very keen to contribute their ideas in discussion. Written work was much more hesitant and some pupils showed poor literacy skills. Teaching was satisfactory although too little attention was given to involving girls in discussion and too little time was devoted to getting pupils to develop more extended and reflective responses. Achievement over time has been adversely affected by staffing problems last year, but pupils are now making better progress.

English

Provision in English is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently good teaching ensures that all pupils are making good progress.
- Standards of care and support are very high, with good extra-curricular activities.
- Pupils show positive attitudes and behave well.
- High standards of leadership have given the department the tools with which to develop.
- The department needs to make greater use of assessment data.

Commentary

73. At the end of Year 9, pupils have attained standards below the national average. However, since they entered the school with standards well below this represents good progress. The performance of boys, in contrast to the national picture, is better than that of girls. Comparison with similar schools shows pupils achieving very well.
74. In GCSE English Language, results for both boys and girls were well below the national average in 2003, but had been close to the national average in the years before. Girls attain better standards than boys, but the difference is less than the difference nationally. In GCSE English Literature, the proportion of high grades was higher than average, but only two thirds of the year group were entered.
75. Standards observed during the inspection were just below the national average, again representing good progress. The department emphasises the development of literacy through clear, accurate writing, but skills in speaking and listening suffer from a lack of opportunity. In the first three years, pupils show that they can write accurately and at a good length. Their stories and poems are fresh and lively. They comment perceptively on a wide range of literature. Achievement is good throughout the school. Progress is most noticeable among those with special education needs.
76. Teaching and learning are both good and sometimes very good, in all years. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and how to teach it. They are conscientious in following the National Key Stage 3 Strategy. Excellent relationships with pupils lead to high motivation and good behaviour. Pupils appreciate the support they are given. Excellent practice was observed in a high attaining Year 10 lesson where the teacher dramatised a Wilfrid Owen poem to inspire the whole class. Marking is occasionally inconsistent, but at its best gives pupils a clear idea of how to improve. Pupils would gain from being shown examples of good essays. They need more practice in the use of computers both to redraft their work and improve its appearance. They are naturally articulate, but seldom comment on each other's ideas. They are too seldom encouraged to read for pleasure.

77. Leadership is very good. The newly appointed head of department has created efficiency and dynamism in a team that had been in some disarray for a year or more previously. She has the vision to see what is needed and the skill to carry her team with her. The department now has an appropriate development plan. Many components of the handbook and schemes of work have been rewritten. She has injected a spirit of optimism in the department, which is reflected in pupils' attitudes.
78. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. There should be better use of assessment data but standards of attainment and the quality of teaching have been restored to the high standards of five years ago. The department is now well placed to improve rapidly.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

79. Attainment in literacy is generally below national expectations, but a policy is in place to raise standards. The teacher recently appointed to take the lead in this initiative is energetic and open-minded, but there is still some inconsistency in the way the policy is acted on. The school working party needs to meet regularly and discuss ideas arising from each department.
80. In many subjects, such as humanities and art, speaking is good because it is given more encouragement than writing, though the reverse is the case in English. Some teachers allow frequent mistakes to remain uncorrected, but all pay due attention to the technical language of the subject. In many lessons, pupils read aloud clearly, showing that they understand.
81. The library is potentially an excellent resource, but considering the number of pupils it is small, with few books. It is very well run and does much for the school despite slender resources. However, few books are borrowed by older pupils and these are mostly girls.

Modern foreign languages

Overall, provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very positive attitudes of pupils to French result in good progress.
- Creative approaches to language teaching engage pupils' interest and promote learning.
- There is a shared commitment to improvement in the French department team.
- Results in GCSE French are well below the national average.
- There are few opportunities for pupils to extend their writing skills.

Commentary

82. In 2003, GCSE results were well below the national average in French. These results are based on a core group studying for one hour a week and those of a small option group who were taught with the full-time allocation. The results of the core group were well below average; those of the small option group were well above average. Standards seen in lessons indicate an improvement this year, particularly in the small Year 10 option group.
83. Based on 2003 teacher assessments, standards at the end of Year 9 in French were well below national expectations. Since pupils arrived at the school with no French at all, achievement is good in both key stages. In most lessons, boys achieve as well as girls. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well because work is usually matched to their individual needs. Higher ability pupils make good progress, but there are few extension activities provided for them beyond the whole class activity.
84. Overall, the quality of teaching is good, with some very good features. Teaching was good or very good in over two thirds of the lessons seen and in over half was very good. In these

lessons, teachers used challenging questions together with a wide range of stimulating and creative teaching methods, including interactive whiteboards, visual resources and song. In two lessons, pupils stood up to do actions to accompany some difficult vocabulary, an activity they thoroughly enjoyed and which was most effective in helping them recall and use these new words throughout the lesson. The development of this type of activity has led to very positive attitudes to French and pupils were keen to say how much they enjoyed the lively learning experience. Teachers' good use of the French language in such lessons has led to pupils speaking willingly in class and with good accents. However, pupils do not use French for routine purposes. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to extend their written skills due to the over reliance on course workbooks. In the small number of satisfactory and unsatisfactory lessons, weaknesses in managing the behaviour of pupils hamper the progress being made. In addition, the pace of the lessons is slow and work is not matched to the level of the pupils.

85. Leadership is good. The department is led by a committed linguist who, together with an equally committed and well-qualified second in department, has formed a clear vision for the future direction of French in the school. This has led to a very dedicated team approach to improvement. There are effective systems in place to monitor teaching and the department has improved pupils' attitudes to language learning due to the high quality of the teaching and its members' enthusiasm for French.
86. Marking across the department is regular but does not give sufficient guidance to pupils on how to improve their written work and move to the next level. Schemes of work are focused on the text book and do not include the detail of the very good methods used in addition. The department enriches pupils' experiences of language through an annual visit to France and Easter holiday revision classes. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. In consultation with the QCA, pupils are allowed to drop French in Years 10 and 11 in order to concentrate on courses more relevant to their needs and aspirations.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils make good progress through Key Stage 3 from a low base.
- Teachers have high expectations and almost all pupils are positive, work hard and are keen to do well.
- The department is now making rapid improvement after several years of unstable staffing, but there is still some weak teaching by temporary or unqualified teachers.
- The introduction of activities in each lesson to improve basic numeracy skills is needed.
- Teachers need more practical resources to enable them to check pupils' learning.
- Assessment is not clear enough in the use of levels, grades and criteria to help pupils know where they are and what they need to do to improve.

Commentary

87. Pupils' attainment in mathematics when they start at the school in Year 7 is very low. Most make good progress as they move through the school. Standards at the end of Year 9 have improved greatly in recent years. In the National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003, standards were below the national average, in line with results in similar schools. Over recent years, however, these results have improved significantly and at a greater rate than the national rising trend.
88. Results in GCSE mathematics in 2003 were low. Only 20 per cent of pupils gained higher levels. This is well below the national average. However, standards of work seen during the inspection suggest that the current Year 11 pupils are working at a higher level and their

results should be better, though still below average. Achievement is now good overall, despite the few instances of unsatisfactory teaching.

89. The most able pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 are working at well above average standards. Their lessons are challenging and their teachers have high expectations. The top set in Year 10 will be entered for GCSE statistics at the end of the year and they are expected to get higher grades. In a very good lesson they quickly learned how to calculate price indices.
90. Lower ability pupils have weak numeracy skills and this hampers their progress. They struggle to recall multiplication facts and carry out simple calculations. In a Year 9 lesson on sequences, for example, pupils had no effective mental methods to add 19. The department is planning to introduce regular mental and oral activities in all lessons to improve these basic skills.
91. Most of the teaching in the mathematics department is good. Lessons are well organised in line with new schemes of work. Clear aims are communicated to pupils, written as titles and recapped at the end of lessons. Key words are highlighted. In a very good Year 11 lesson with low ability pupils, the teacher made sure that they all repeated and practised the new vocabulary, read sentences aloud and correctly wrote the new words and symbols.
92. Pupils respond well to the high expectations of teachers. Most are keen to answer questions and many offer to demonstrate their understanding to the class by writing on the board. They work hard and are keen to do well. Teachers know their pupils well and provide helpful comments and support. In a very good Year 9 lesson on shape, pupils used individual whiteboards to show their answers so that the teacher could assess every pupil's understanding. Whole class assessment like this is underused, however and has been identified as an area for development. All pupils have target levels or grades which indicate what they could achieve at the end of the key stage. Classrooms have descriptions of levels displayed. However, few pupils understand what each level or grade means and which aspects of mathematics they need to improve. Marking does not sufficiently identify this and targets are far too general. The school's system of passing information for each lesson between teachers and teaching assistants enables pupils with special educational needs to have appropriate help in order to progress.
93. Where teaching is weak, the pace of lessons is too slow and explanations less than clear. On these rare occasions, pupils become frustrated and lose interest. As a result, they make too little progress. Over recent years, the department has had a high turnover of staff and currently has a number of unqualified teachers whose knowledge of mathematics and appropriate methods is limited. These teachers are temporary.
94. After several years of unstable staffing, the department now has a new head of department who leads well with a clear vision of the improvements needed. The core team of good teachers are working well together to make the necessary improvements. With satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection, they now have the capacity to ensure that standards continue to rise over coming years.

Numeracy across the curriculum

95. Many pupils have weak numeracy skills when they join the school. Most have limited mental ability to carry out a range of calculations. Below average pupils often struggle to recall multiplication facts. This limits their progress in mathematics and also in other subjects which apply mathematics, such as science and design and technology. The individual education plans written for pupils with special educational needs sometimes identify numeracy as an issue, but too few identify clear targets for development in this area.
96. The whole school development of numeracy across the curriculum has been limited by recent staffing issues. Initial work on auditing and the development of a policy have not been systematically followed up to ensure effective improvements are made. The head of the

mathematics department has recently taken over the role of numeracy coordinator and is planning to review and improve progress over the next year.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' overall achievement from Year 7 to Year 11 is good with very good progress being made in the first three years.
- The subject benefits from very good leadership and very effective management.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and the consistently good teaching enables pupils to learn well.
- The relationship between teachers and pupils is very good.
- The ICT resources are good, but the quantity of textbooks is inadequate for the range of GCSE courses offered.
- Some higher ability pupils do not reach their full potential at GCSE.

Commentary

97. Pupils enter the school at a standard well below the national average but by the end of Year 9 results are broadly in line with the national average and well above the standard reached in similar schools. This shows very good achievement in Years 7-9.
98. At GCSE, the department currently offers an unusual range of courses - an arrangement supported by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) - to cater for the individual needs of the pupils. The majority follow the new, vocational double-award course - applied science - and the early indications are that pupils are making good progress and should gain good results. The higher ability pupils follow two separate GCSE courses in a combination of biology, chemistry and physics. Results in 2003 were below the national average but much better than those achieved in similar schools. However, the number of pupils gaining the highest grades of A* and A is extremely small and could be improved by greater differentiation of tasks. Lower ability pupils have the opportunity to spend two years studying for a single GCSE award in biology. The recent results for this course are encouraging with the majority of pupils significantly outperforming their predicted GCSE grade. Overall, the achievement seen in lessons was good.
99. The overall achievement of pupils in science between the ages of 11 and 16 is good and much better than that in similar schools. This good progress is due to consistently good teaching. Some very good lessons were also observed and none was found to be unsatisfactory. Teachers are caring and determined to do their best for the pupils. Their subject knowledge is good and they prepare the pupils very thoroughly for the external examinations. Pupils co-operate and take pride in their work. The department is incorporating ideas from the National Key Stage 3 Strategy, such as the three-part lesson. There is very good use of starter activities to engage the whole-class and learning objectives are discussed with the pupils at the start of the lesson and revised in the plenary session. Very good use of ICT was observed in lessons where, for example, PowerPoint presentations helped pupils understand abstract and difficult concepts. Lessons were judged to be only satisfactory when there was insufficient variety in teaching style and too narrow a range of stimuli to capture the interest of the pupils.
100. Reliable assessments of pupils' knowledge and understanding of the work covered take place frequently so that pupils' progress can be carefully monitored. Well-focused support is offered to those pupils felt to be underachieving and the revision sessions offered by staff in preparation for GCSE examinations are much appreciated by the pupils.

101. The very good leadership of the department has a significant impact on the good progress made by the pupils. The head of department has a very clear vision for the future of science in this school. Her hard work and strong dedication to bringing about continuous improvement provide a very good role model for both staff and pupils. Her leadership is scrupulously fair and she has established a very coherent and harmonious team of staff, all committed to the development of the department. Fresh innovations are always being considered. The introduction of self-assessment tick-sheets and homework booklets is already having a positive impact; much time has been productively spent in rewriting the schemes of work and creating the science department's website.
102. The science department has very good technical support with a strong team of technicians who work closely with the teachers and provide an excellent service. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection, notably in standards and leadership.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching in both key stages is good and has a positive impact on pupils' standards of achievement.
- The Key Stage 3 National Strategy for ICT is helping pupils to achieve well.
- The attitude and behaviour of the pupils in lessons contribute to their development and success.
- The strategic leadership and day-to-day management of staff teaching ICT are very good.
- Self-evaluation of the department is very good.
- Teaching by temporary and unqualified staff is unsatisfactory.
- Ventilation in ICT rooms is poor.

Commentary

103. In 2003, teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were below national expectations. Three GCSE courses are offered to pupils: GNVQ, GCSE and a short course with a certificate of achievement. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, pupils attained results that were slightly above the national average. These results reflect a strong trend of improvement.
104. Standards seen in Year 9 are below national expectations. Pupils confidently operate personal computers, a variety of software applications and research the Internet. They use word-processing, desktop publishing and presentation software effectively and understand how to create spreadsheets and databases. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 are in line with national expectations and pupils are on target to achieve examination success. Pupils understand the concepts taught in their applied ICT course and many produce coursework of a good standard. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11.
105. Teaching and learning are generally good overall. In the very few lessons where they are unsatisfactory, ICT is taught by temporary or unqualified staff. When teaching is satisfactory or better, staff have a good command of their subject and their teaching methods fully engage the pupils. Teachers use presentational software well to introduce lesson objectives and to illustrate teaching points. Behaviour management is effective and the good pace of lessons is rarely slowed down by the need to control pupils. Teachers effectively use a full range of resources, including interactive whiteboards and computer suites.
106. Teachers plan their work thoroughly. They advise pupils on the work they have completed and how it can be improved. In consequence, pupils make good progress and enjoy learning. Attitudes are good and the working atmosphere in lessons positive, which further improves the effectiveness of teaching.

107. Leadership of ICT is very good. There is a clear strategic vision for ICT in both curriculum and administration which extends to the work of the whole school. Clear strategies for school improvement through very good self-evaluation procedures have been adopted and lead to constant improvement. A very effective ICT development group with representation from each subject is an extremely useful forum for pedagogical discussion and decision-making for cross-curricular hardware and software. There has been encouragement for pupils' use of ICT throughout the curriculum. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

108. Pupils' skills in using ICT are developing well throughout the school. Classes are offered at breakfast and lunchtimes to support and further develop ICT competencies. There is growing use of ICT to support subject teaching. Interesting examples were noted in history where Year 9 gifted and talented pupils were involved in a local post-war housing project resulting in the production of a DVD. The French department has forged links with Shineland Language College and in a Year 10 PSHE lesson, pupils were comparing interest rates on banking sites. However, some subjects do not use ICT effectively enough in their teaching. There is not much evidence in English, for example, except for the word-processing of finished work; the English department has very restricted access to the ICT rooms because their accommodation is far away and too insecure to house its own computers.

109. There has been considerable investment in hardware and the school is progressively providing both hardwired and wireless networked access to its servers and to the Internet throughout the site. This has resulted in the widespread use of the Internet as a resource for learning with a broadband connection offering rapid and secure access, except in the sixth form which hampers students' progress.

110. The school has created a web site and Internet area for use by staff and pupils. Although its content is currently limited, it offers an exciting route to develop a fully resourced virtual learning environment to support learning.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching is carefully adapted to the needs of all pupils.
- Pupils of all abilities have very good attitudes to learning.
- Leadership is very good.
- Very good display work stimulates thinking and celebrates pupils' work.
- There are few opportunities for field work in Years 7 – 9.

Commentary

111. Pupils enter the school with below average levels of attainment although they display a wide range of geographical experiences. Despite starting from a low base, pupils make good progress so that by the end of Year 9 standards are closer to, although still below, the national average. In Year 11 in 2003, standards were below the national average, but results are in line with those obtained in schools in similar contexts. There is little difference between the performance of boys and girls and pupils do as well in geography as they do in other subjects they take.

112. Achievement is good across the school. The gains in knowledge and understanding that have been made in the early years in the school are consolidated in Years 10 and 11.
113. Teaching and learning are good overall and very good in Years 10 and 11. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen and several lessons were very good or excellent. The most successful lessons were those in which pupils' attention was quickly engaged through imaginative and active learning opportunities, in which expectations were high and where activities were carefully matched to pupils' needs. Careful monitoring of learning, very good management of teaching assistants and very good use of assessment data in teachers' planning all contributed to the excellent relationships between teachers and pupils, making the atmosphere in classrooms harmonious and purposeful. In those lessons where pace was lacking and where monitoring of learning was less secure, pupils achieved less well. All lessons provided opportunities for pupils to develop their reading and speaking ability, although further development of skills in extended writing is required. Opportunities to use and develop numeracy are not provided frequently enough. Use of ICT by teachers is very good and good examples of pupils' work were seen.

Example of outstanding practice

In a Year 7 lesson on the origins and distribution of place names, excellent planning and imaginative activities ensured that pupils worked hard and enjoyed doing so.

Pupils were instantly engaged in the lesson when, working in pairs, they were asked to imagine the meaning of names which they then told the class. Working in groups, they then took the parts of invading tribes and plotted place names on maps of Britain. Each tribe presented their place name locations to the class and was able to describe and explain the patterns of distribution. Throughout the lesson the teacher's strong insistence on careful thinking and listening and the variety of activities that allowed pupils to learn in different styles produced an atmosphere of high endeavour and collaboration. To replicate this lesson a teacher's planning needs to be excellent, paying close attention to the different ways in which pupils learn.

114. Leadership is very good. The head of department is an excellent role model who ensures that good practice is shared throughout an effective team. Schemes of work are detailed, carefully adapted to the wide range of pupils' needs and lessons are planned imaginatively using innovative strategies that suit a wide range of learning styles. They also seek to develop thinking skills and to build confidence in pupils. The excellent attitudes to the subject displayed by pupils in almost all lessons are due in great part to this outstanding planning and teamwork. Marking and assessment are very good. Helpful comments, clearly-set targets for improvement and the use of key pieces of work for assessment enable pupils to have a clear idea of the standard they have reached and what they need to do to progress further. The use of data in setting and reviewing targets is very good, especially in Years 10 and 11.
115. The geography rooms are spacious and have adjacent storage and display space. However, the temporary nature of the accommodation, the need to teach some lessons in non-specialist rooms and the distance from the main school are limiting factors, especially in providing opportunities for the use of ICT in lessons. Improvement in geography since the previous inspection has been good.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Specialist staff are enthusiastic, inventive and knowledgeable.
- An increasing number of pupils choosing history as an option in Year 10.
- Teaching and learning in all years are good, leading to good achievement by pupils.
- Marking is not detailed enough, particularly with regard to spelling and the use of capital letters.
- Tasks for the lower ability pupils are not always matched to their abilities.

Commentary

116. Standards reported in teacher assessments for Year 9 in 2003 are below average. Standards overall seen in the inspection in Year 9 continue to be below average but are improving. The achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is good. Pupils enter the school with well below average standards but respond well to good teaching, high expectations and well-established routines in making good progress in their acquisition of knowledge and skills. Year 7 study 'What is history?' at the start of their course and this helps the development of their historical skills, particularly in chronology and causation, which are poor when they enter the school.
117. Only one pupil took GCSE history in 2003. Current standards in Year 11 are below average, whilst attainment in Year 10 is nearer to average. In both years, the current attainment is better than predicted and their achievement is good due to the pupils' very positive attitudes and the very good teaching which focuses upon examination requirements.
118. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are good. In lessons observed, teaching was good or very good; in one class it was excellent. Pupils of below average ability involved in a role-play of the trial of Charles the First grasped extremely difficult concepts about the nature and responsibilities of monarchy through the use of excellent materials and skilful questioning. Whilst enthusiastically involved in taking sides in the conflict, their attitudes and behaviour were exemplary and resulted in excellent learning. In other lessons, pupils similarly benefit from teaching which is also inventive and varied. All teachers in the department are now history specialists and their knowledge, planning and commitment to high standards are having a positive impact on pupils' attitudes and behaviour, which in turn are helping their learning and leading to higher standards and to a significant increase in pupils opting for history at the end of Year 9.
119. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are very good. Teachers use a variety of teaching methods to help pupils' learning. Lessons are well planned and structured with a focus on examination requirements and expectations are high. Pupils learn well because their behaviour is very good as is their attitude to work. In all years, assessment is generally effective in providing pupils with targets for improvement but marking is not always sufficiently detailed to improve poor spelling and grammar. The learning of lower ability pupils is often limited because the tasks set do not sufficiently match their abilities.
120. Leadership is very good. The head of department has established very effective routines which all staff deploy. Together with high expectations and challenging work, they underpin the very positive attitudes of pupils. Teamwork and relationships are excellent and teachers are encouraged to be innovative and explore new approaches to improve learning. Pupils' work is regularly monitored and teaching evaluated in a supportive environment.
121. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The department is now staffed by specialist staff. Teaching is interesting, exciting and effective and includes a visit to a historical site in each year. History is becoming increasingly popular, with over 90 pupils opting to take history GCSE next year – three times the current number in Year 11. Teachers also make time to teach a GCSE group after school.

Religious education

Provision for religious education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good achievement.
- Very good leadership and management.
- Good teaching.
- Marking does not do enough to help pupils improve their work.

- Poor provision of textbooks.

Commentary

122. In the 2003 GCSE short course examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A*-C was above the national average. There has been a very significant trend to improvement over time; since the year 2000, the percentage of pupils gaining grades A*-C has doubled.
123. At age 14, standards are in line with the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus and pupils are achieving very well, since they enter the school with well below average attainment. They have a sound knowledge and understanding of the origins and distinctive features of Christianity and other principal religions in the country. They understand why their adherents' beliefs are important to them and how they shape their lives. They can make a thoughtful personal response to religious questions. At age 16, standards in GCSE short course examination are average and pupils are again achieving very well. They have, for example, a sound grasp of the insights of Christianity and Sikhism into contemporary ethical issues.
124. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and very good or excellent in a significant proportion of lessons. Where learning is strongest, teachers have a very good grasp of their subject and clear aims that they share and review with pupils. They plan very well to challenge pupils with interesting work that is well matched to their individual needs. Year 7 pupils, for example, made excellent gains in understanding the events surrounding the discovery of the empty tomb of Jesus because they were cast in the role of detectives, drawing out and evaluating witness statements from the central characters in the events. Pupils give of their best because teachers expect the best, of work and behaviour. The impact of teaching on learning is heightened by the excellent relationships teachers engender in the classroom and the very good attitudes pupils bring to lessons. Where learning is less effective, it is because non-specialist teachers have a less secure grasp of the subject. Marking, though conscientious and supportive, does not do enough to help pupils understand how to raise the standard of their work.
125. The department is very well led by a recently appointed specialist, who has done much to move the subject on in a short space of time. The very good teamwork within the humanities faculty makes a strong contribution to standards. There has been very good improvement overall since the previous inspection. Standards are very much higher, because of significant improvements to the quality of teaching, schemes of work, assessment procedures, staffing and accommodation. If standards are to be further raised, the school should address the poor provision of textbooks, which is hindering the development of pupils' skills of independent learning, research and enquiry.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good in all years, made possible by good teaching and learning.
- Computer aided design and manufacture are fully integrated into all areas.
- Accommodation and resources in food technology and catering are excellent.
- The department provides a comprehensive range of courses that matches the needs of the pupils.
- The classrooms need a greater variety of materials, products and display of high quality work.
- Drawing, designing and the development of ideas are in need of development.

Commentary

126. Results in 2003 in GCSE and the large range of vocational courses indicate that the standards are broadly average. Examination results show a steady improvement. Current standards are average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 and represent good achievement for all pupils from their very low starting point in Year 7. This progress is made possible by well-organised teaching. Lessons are characterised by good planning with clear objectives linked to the requirements of GCSE or the National Curriculum programmes of study. The range of vocational courses available for Years 10 and 11 is wide and provides many opportunities for pupils to choose a style of learning that suits them. Pupils are very motivated in these highly practical vocational courses and achieve very well. The learning environment needs improvement and development to include more permanent displays of high quality examples of work and modern products to extend and raise standards and expectations further.
127. Teaching and learning are good overall in all years. Teachers organise a wide range of well-planned activities that fully engage all pupils. Computer-aided designing and manufacture are very well developed and make a good impact across the department, with a very motivating and engaging effect on pupils. The food technology and catering accommodation and resources are excellent. This coupled with the carefully focused teaching in this area provide the strength of the department.
128. Pupils respond well to the very effective support from teaching assistants and technicians in all areas. Assessment is embedded into the teaching and consultation with pupils is informative, well received and acted upon. Information and communication technology is well developed with standards of computer-aided designing high. However, drawing and designing by hand and the development of ideas are only rudimentary and have not received sufficient emphasis. Pupils' attitude and behaviour are good. They show that they are very interested in their work and are very positive about the subject. A very good, well-organised programme of enrichment exists for the gifted and talented pupils with competitions and events to stimulate and extend their achievement.
129. Leadership of the subject is very good. The ambition, direction and energy of the staff as a team to establish the department as a major influence in the school have been successful and very positive features. The head of department provides visionary leadership with an innovative curriculum. A highly professional dialogue exists about the teaching and learning within the team of teachers. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good with further improvements in achievement, standards and pupils' attitudes. All issues highlighted in the previous report have been fully addressed.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers and pupils enjoy good relationships and pupils benefit from personal tuition and guidance.
- In Years 10 and 11, lessons have good integration of theory and practical work.
- Pupils' insufficient use of ceramics limits three-dimensional experience in Years 7 to 9.
- Assessment procedures in Years 7 to 9 relating to national levels are not developed enough to improve learning further.
- The large size of groups in Year 9 and insufficient time limit media experience.

Commentary

130. The proportion of pupils gaining grades A* to C in GCSE examinations in 2003 was well below the national average and led to the introduction of the vocational course which suits the pupils' learning styles better. Standards in the current Year 9 are average. This represents good achievement for many pupils in relation to their knowledge, understanding and skills when they entered the school. Lower ability pupils and those with special educational need, make good progress. These standards are achieved because pupils apply themselves purposefully to their work and are supported well in lessons. Pupils of all abilities work from direct observation, research and develop their art and use line and tone effectively in their drawings.
131. Standards in the current Year 11 are average. This represents satisfactory achievement over the two years of the course for the majority of pupils. The introduction of the applied art vocational course, together with the existing certificate of educational achievement and GCSE courses, is having a positive impact on the numbers taking art and design and on the standards achieved. There is no significant variation in the achievement of different groups of pupils.
132. Pupils' preliminary research is often thorough, but development into finished design is inconsistent. Sketchbooks are annotated and pupils show some influence of important movements in art and design or of particular artists. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and benefit from individual attention. Good matching of tasks to capabilities ensures that average and above average pupils are sufficiently challenged. They often demonstrate personal interests, ideas and responses to their own and other cultures through the work they produce.
133. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Good teaching was observed when pupils were actively engaged in debate about their work and clear about their intermediate learning objectives. When behaviour is well managed and sharp teacher questioning is used to ensure the participation of all pupils, responses were very positive. Teachers are aware of the capabilities of their pupils and often meet their needs through good quality individual tuition. They use their knowledge and subject expertise to good effect and lesson preparation is good. However, assessment procedures relating to national levels in Years 7 to 9 are not communicated to pupils to help them understand what to do next to improve their work.
134. The leadership of art and design is satisfactory. Staff have good subject knowledge and expertise and work well as a team. Taught skills are enhanced by opportunities for pupils to make contact with artists and artwork, both in and out of school. The management of the department is good and schemes of work and departmental policies provide good guidance for staff so that consistency is ensured throughout the department. The work of the department is adequately monitored through classroom observations and work sampling. The absence of technical support and the large size of groups in Year 9 restrict the range of media activities taught. Insufficient use of clay limits the development of pupils' three-dimensional skills.
135. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory, most notably in the provision and use of ICT and the introduction of the applied art and design vocational course for Years 10 and 11.

Drama

Provision in drama is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in GCSE have been consistently in line with the national average and were above average in 2003.

- Teaching that is good or very good leads to high achievement.
- Drama productions and theatre visits enhance the cultural awareness of pupils.
- Accommodation is barely adequate.

Commentary

136. Standards at the end of Year 9 are in line with the national average and in GCSE frequently above average. These results are among the best in the school and show very good achievement when compared with pupils' low academic attainment when they join the school and their lack of previous experience of drama.
137. These results were confirmed by observation of lessons. Pupils listen attentively. They are quick to perceive what is required and respond well to the stimulus provided by the teacher. They work very well together, devising imaginative ways of presenting the task set. They have an increasing understanding of dramatic conventions and in lessons seen, made excellent use of freeze frames to illustrate different interpretations of a story. They respond well to the strengths of each other's presentations and comment on them perceptively. Indeed, all lessons showed pupils speaking fluently and listening to each other sensitively, with visibly good results.
138. Teaching is good with very good features. Teachers are well equipped by their knowledge and experience and communicate very well with their classes, giving them imaginative tasks and then letting groups work out their own ideas. They are adept at supporting pupils while they develop their responses, challenging, suggesting and praising. Control is very good, so pupils are instantly silent when the teacher needs to speak to the whole class. Homework is set more frequently than in many schools, encouraging pupils to research from newspapers, books or the Internet. Regular assessment is an aid to progress.
139. The range of extra-curricular activities is good. In recent years the department has staged *Bugsy Malone* and *Annie*. There is a drama club after school and GCSE revision groups two nights a week. Teachers organise many visits to professional productions such as *Bouncers*, *The Importance of being Ernest* and *Coriolanus*.
140. At the last inspection drama was included as part of the English department. Its status and results have been improved by evolving as a separate department, though links with English are still strong. Leadership is good. There are two teachers in the department, but only one space adequately equipped for teaching drama and that needs refurbishment.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Extra-curricular provision is good.
- The administration and management of the department are good.
- Marking and assessment procedures are insufficiently developed.
- Information and communication technology resources are underused.

Commentary

141. Standards in Year 11 are below the national expectations. In the 2003 GCSE examination standards were below the national average. Boys achieved better than girls. Pupils in Year 11 have a good understanding of the Dorian and Aeolian modes and the pentatonic scale. In analysing the song, "Reach", they made satisfactory progress in their understanding of motif, sequencing, scale formation and antecedent phrases. Achievement is satisfactory.

142. Standards in Year 9 are below the national average. Pupils have a satisfactory theoretical knowledge which they use effectively but they are unclear about the elements of music. They are able to play blues chords on the keyboard and make satisfactory progress in composing a walking bass line.
143. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, leading to satisfactory all-round achievement. Teachers and visiting instrumentalists have a secure knowledge of music and are competent performers. Pupils enjoy the subject and the lessons and are keen to learn. A range of teaching styles effectively sustains their interest. Those with special educational needs and higher ability pupils are known to the teacher and work is adapted to meet their individual needs. Pupils work well as a class, in small groups and individually. Those in Year 9, for example, enjoyed working in pairs to compose and perform an improvised section to their blues compositions. They effectively appraise their own and each other's performances.
144. Although pupils' work is effectively assessed as the lesson proceeds, both the marking of pupils' work and target setting are unsatisfactory. Teaching is best when pupils are given a range of activities related to listening, composing, performing and appraising. There is good pace and rigour when aspects of the lesson are delivered within a time frame. Teaching is least effective when lessons become too noisy. Seventy-five pupils benefit from free instrumental tuition. Extra-curricular 'Wodo singers', keyboard club and drum club effectively involve up to 75 pupils. These activities, school shows and carol services effectively complement class teaching. Accommodation is satisfactory. Information and communication technology and music technology resources are not being fully used because staff are not trained in their use.
145. Leadership of the department is good. Standards have been maintained since the previous inspection, indicating satisfactory improvement.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement through Years 7 to 9 is now good.
- The leadership and management of the department are good.
- The unsatisfactory indoor accommodation has a negative impact on standards and achievement.
- Teaching and learning are good.

Commentary

146. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were well below the national average because pupils do not fully develop the learning skills, which are required in the physical education GCSE coursework. In work seen, standards have improved especially in the present Year 10. In Years 10 and 11, core physical education standards are in line with national averages. By the end of Year 9, standards are in line with national averages. In Years 7 to 9 and at GCSE, the standard of girls is better than that of some boys.
147. When pupils enter the school, standards are below average. Standards are in line with national averages by the end of Year 9, representing good achievement. In work seen in Years 7 to 9 the impact of strategies recently introduced by the department to raise standards has been to produce good achievement. In tennis, pupils explain the different techniques required to produce topspin and backspin when playing a forehand shot. They transfer this knowledge to performing the techniques in simple paired work. However, most pupils have difficulty in transferring these techniques to a game because of a lack of fast footwork necessary to move quickly into the correct body position.

148. By the end of Year 11, standards in GCSE physical education are below national averages, which, when judged against pupils' standards when they started the course, represents satisfactory achievement. Pupils' learning is restricted by a lack of fully developed learning skills, and - for some disaffected pupils - an inconsistent response to teaching. Pupils use their knowledge of the correct technique when performing practical activities, but they have difficulty in using this knowledge to evaluate others' performance and to respond to challenging questioning in both oral and written forms.
149. In core physical education, pupils are not aware of the levels that they are working at and do not have targets for improvement. Pupils with special educational needs generally achieve at the same rate as other pupils. The achievement of some is restricted by unsatisfactory indoor facilities.
150. Teaching and learning are overall good. In Years 7 to 9 pupils particularly benefit from knowledgeable teachers, who target work well to the pupils' current standards, with some pupils often working with different equipment and on different tasks. Where learning is not so good, teachers do not use National Curriculum levels in assessment, so pupils do not know what they can do and how to improve through target setting. In GCSE physical education, pupils are engaged in a variety of interesting and challenging activities, which motivate them and keep them interested. Pupils are developing good independent learning skills and can effectively work on tasks which require them to take responsibility for their own learning. In Years 10 and 11 core physical education, pupils' learning is restricted by unsatisfactory indoor facilities and a time allocation, which does not enable them all to take part in two hours of physical activity per week. Some pupils enhance their performance in sport through a good extra-curricular programme.
151. Leadership and management are good. The department is now developing a clearer vision for raising standards. Teaching and learning have improved well since the last inspection and are now consistently better than satisfactory. Good management systems support teachers. Assessment procedures, which include the analysis of performance data, ensure that teachers have good knowledge of standards. Curricular development will benefit from the analysis of these data.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

The school offers a number of vocational subjects in Years 10 and 11. Business education was fully inspected. Child development, motor mechanics, leisure and tourism, catering and vocational construction industry skills were all sampled.

Business education

The provision in business education is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching leads to the achievement of good examination grades.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge which they use to motivate pupils.
- Links with local business are not well developed which limits the vocational contribution of this subject.
- The subject is well led with a clear vision of its future development.

Commentary

152. Examination results in business are good. The GNVQ results for last year were better than national expectations. Results are better than in other subjects and, given the standards shown by pupils at the beginning of this course, show good value added, making achievement good.

153. Teaching is good and business courses are well planned to meet the requirements of both examination and coursework. Assessment is very thorough and is used to help pupils improve their business skills. They know what they have to do in order to achieve better grades and they respond keenly to the high expectations of their teachers. They listen well, work hard and behave well. These positive responses ensure that learning is also good.
154. The leadership of the department is good. Schemes of work are well developed and the head of department has a very good understanding of the potential future contribution of the subject to the curriculum, not only for those in Years 10 and 11 but also for younger pupils in citizenship lessons. Although some links with the local business community have been established these have yet to be developed to their full potential. At present the extent to which pupils can draw upon real business practice and problems to develop their vocational skills is limited.

Child development

155. The provision of childcare courses is good and this is a popular option appealing to girls who might otherwise be disaffected with school. One lesson was sampled and discussion with pupils was undertaken. Teaching is good, well organised and highly relevant for the girls, many of whom have difficult lives at home. They behave very well, make good progress and show high levels of interest. A significant number indicated that they were interested in a career in caring.

Motor mechanics

156. Entry-level motor vehicle courses are provided by Sandwell Technical College and pupils in Years 10 and 11 attend for a half a day each week. Two sessions were sampled in which pupils attained well. Many have had previously poor attendance records but they all respond well to the different teaching environment and make good progress in developing practical skills. They find it harder to concentrate and progress in theory lessons because of their poor literacy. The school works well with the college, communications are good and any problems about behaviour or attendance are quickly dealt with. A number of Year 11 pupils indicated that they intended to apply for higher-level courses offered by the college.

Leisure and tourism

157. Leisure and tourism is offered to pupils in Years 10 and 11 as part of the vocational pathway. Two lessons were sampled during the inspection in which teaching and learning were good. A wide range of learning activities is offered to pupils and teachers skilfully employ active learning methods to develop pupils' personal skills in discussion and negotiation. Pupils frequently work in pairs or in small groups and very good use is made of peer assessment and evaluation. Extensive use is made of pupils' skills in ICT both in processing information on spreadsheets and in databases and also in producing promotional material. Pupils' attitudes are very good and teachers take care to emphasise the workplace content of the subject both through the activities that are undertaken and by linking the work to the pupils' work experience placements.

Food technology

158. Food technology and hospitality and catering are both offered as vocational options to pupils in Years 10 and 11. One lesson was sampled in which all pupils made very good progress. Two boys of low ability cooked meals for the first time and they were clearly very proud of their achievements. The class contained pupils with very poor literacy and a number with other considerable impediments to learning. Teaching was very good and excellent help was offered by a support teacher and two teaching assistants. The latter had an excellent rapport with their pupils. Behaviour was very good and pupils worked very well with each other.

Construction industry apprenticeship scheme

159. Years 10 and 11 pupils have the opportunity to follow a vocational curriculum based on the construction industry apprenticeship scheme. Currently 12 pupils spend one day a week in the workshops at Galton Valley where they learn manual skills such as carpentry, plastering, plumbing, painting and decorating. Pupils observed were committed and focused in their work, polite and well behaved, responding well to these opportunities. This extended vocational curriculum is very well developed and well matched to the needs of pupils who are disaffected with the academic curriculum or unsuited to it. The quality of provision at Galton Valley is very good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are offered many opportunities for developing skills of participation and responsible action.
- Some teaching is very good, providing examples of good practice.
- Detailed schemes of work are in place based on a thorough audit of provision.
- Assessment arrangements are weak.
- There are areas of overlap in the programmes of study for personal, health and social education and citizenship.

Commentary

160. Citizenship is taught by form tutors at the same time in tutor groups and through other subjects as part of an agreed programme. A thorough audit of the requirements of the National Curriculum for citizenship has been carried out and the schemes of work ensure that all three strands are addressed. In 2004, the majority of Year 11 pupils will take the GCSE short course examination in citizenship.
161. Standards of written work seen were below average although the willingness of pupils to participate in discussions and to take responsible actions as above average.
162. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall varying from very good to, in one case, unsatisfactory. Most teachers have very good skills of behaviour management and provide good opportunities for discussion to which pupils respond very well. Specific topics are taught with other subjects and teachers are careful to draw attention to the citizenship context and link this to the appropriate strand.
163. Pupils of all capabilities and ethnic backgrounds, especially those with special educational needs, develop their skills of participation and responsible action through many aspects of school life. Older pupils act as peer mentors to younger ones and take an active part in the induction of those who are new to the school. Year 11 pupils are designated as stewards who have many responsibilities towards both their peers and the school as an institution. They take part in the process of interviewing new staff, for example and make their recommendations to the senior management team. A rich and varied range of extra-curricular activities makes a valuable contribution to pupils' education in citizenship. Assessment procedures are not fully in place.
164. The coordinator of citizenship is newly appointed and has shown good leadership in ensuring that the schemes of work are in place and that the core values of the school are firmly embedded in the teaching programme. It is intended that all pupils in Year 10 will be entered

for the short course GCSE examination to give citizenship the status that other examined subjects enjoy. In addition, personal, health and social education is taught in the same time allocation as citizenship and areas of overlap need to be addressed to avoid confusion and duplication. The leadership of the senior staff and governors is very good in creating a learning environment in the school that is fully inclusive and offers pupils real opportunities to learn to be good citizens through active involvement.

165. Personal, health and social education (PHSE) incorporates careers and citizenship. It is taught through discrete lessons in all years - one lesson per week. Pupils achieve well and make good gains in knowledge, understanding and skills across a range of appropriate topics.
166. The effectiveness of teaching in PHSE lessons observed was varied but good overall. In Years 10 and 11 pupils are taught by specialists as part of a 'carousel'. In Years 7 to 9, form teachers teach the course. They are not specialists in the topics but pupils make good progress because form tutors provide continuity in teaching over the three years and pupils benefit from the very good relationships afforded by this aspect of pastoral support.
167. The co-ordination of the work in PHSE lessons is effective through the joint planning of the course and the monitoring of teaching undertaken by year heads. Pupils also evaluate the value of the various elements of the course through termly questionnaires. Clearer identification and better monitoring of the learning outcomes need to be made for each of the units taught.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, six subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good.
- Students who embark on the course achieve their ambitions.
- Standards are below average.

Commentary

168. The sixth form course currently offers about ten students in Year 12 the opportunity to improve their GCSE grades. In this it is likely to be successful, but standards are below those expected of Year 12 students nationally. Students make frequent errors in their writing and their vocabulary is narrow. They are keen to do well, but lack confidence in their ability to do so.
169. Teaching is good. The one lesson observed was well adapted to the needs of the class and showed a most imaginative approach to a poem which contained many obscurities. Marking is helpful and consequently students know what they should do, and achieve well. The lesson observed contributed to the moral and cultural development of the students, dealing as it did with the experience of life under apartheid.
170. The management of English in the sixth form shows the same high degree of competence found in the main school. The department now needs to build on the expected success in Year 11 and offer advanced level courses which will fulfil students' potential.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and students make good progress.
- Information and communication technology is used well in lessons to motivate students.
- Standards are below average.

Commentary

171. There are 11 students on the GCSE retake course – ten boys and one girl. Most achieved E grades in Year 11 and are aiming for a grade C or better this year. Many are likely to achieve this, since the standard of their work is approaching average for GCSE mathematics.
172. Teaching in the one lesson observed was good; the teacher's use of ICT motivated students and the clear structure of the lesson, together with good guidance on how to gain marks at GCSE, ensured that students made good progress and achieved well. One or two were not as actively involved in their study as is expected of sixth formers, however.
173. Leadership is good. The new head of department leads sixth form work with the same clear vision as he does the rest of the school.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good** but non-viable.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers know their students well and offer them good advice and guidance.
- The department tries to cater for the individual needs of the students.
- The number of students recruited onto the advanced certificate of vocational education (AVCE) course is very small and most leave within a few months of starting.
- The very small number of students opting for post-16 science courses makes the provision non-viable.

Commentary

174. Most students enter the sixth form at a standard well below the national average and many cannot cope with the demands of the AVCE science course which is equivalent to two GCE A-levels. There are no students in Year 13 and in the current Year 12 the only students who have survived to this stage of the course are those who achieved at least a grade C in GCSE science. As yet, no students have completed the AVCE course but the standard demonstrated by the students in the lessons observed was currently in line with national expectations.
175. During the inspection it was only possible to observe two lessons. One involved a solitary student working on his main Year 12 project, an analysis of different water samples. The teacher provided good support and clearly knew the student well. The department had bought a special water-hardness test kit specifically for this student's investigation thereby demonstrating a clear commitment to helping and encouraging students on the AVCE course. The other lesson observed was a physics theory lesson on fluid flow. Teaching was good and both students responded well to the tasks set which were of a good A-level standard.
176. A skeletal scheme of work is in place and is being revised as units are being taught. Assessments occur frequently to keep students well informed about their progress and to

indicate how they can improve the standard of their work. Both students were clearly appreciative that this course is being offered and they both expected to gain entry to university on the strength of their AVCE qualifications.

177. The current provision is good in terms of the subject knowledge and commitment of the teachers involved but unless there is a significant increase in the number of students taking the course it will remain too expensive and non-cost-effective.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching.
- Good facilities are available for on-line learning.
- The ICT suite is cramped and poorly ventilated.

Commentary

178. AVCE level examination courses in ICT have been recently introduced but no students have yet taken external examinations. Standards of work seen in Year 12 were satisfactory.
179. Three lessons were observed and teaching and learning were generally good. Teachers have a good command of their subject and their teaching methods fully engage the students. Teachers effectively use a full range of resources, including interactive whiteboards and computer suites.
180. Teachers organise their work thoroughly and provide well-planned lessons. Students work independently and have access to good quality on-line virtual learning resources created by the school. Students make good progress and enjoy their learning. Attitudes to learning are good and the working atmosphere in lessons is positive.
181. The sixth form ICT suite whilst well resourced is small and poorly ventilated. This makes it hot and an uncomfortable working environment.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers and pupils enjoy good relationships.
- The retention rate of students is poor.
- There is insufficient technical support for the teaching of a wide range of media activities.
- Students have too few opportunities to develop work on a large scale in both two- and three-dimensional studies.

Commentary

182. The number of students is very small and no judgements can, therefore, be made against national criteria. Standards in the current Year 12 are below those seen in most schools. The quality of work in students' portfolios and sketchbooks confirms these standards. Achievement is satisfactory and portfolios show that students have carried out some thoughtful investigation and some creative exploration of ideas. Students display some ability

and understanding of ICT in their assignment work. Work in sketchbooks shows annotation and an understanding of design principles, but development into finished design is inconsistent. An opportunity to develop work in both two- and three-dimensions on a larger scale would develop skills further.

183. The quality of teaching and learning overall is satisfactory. Students are encouraged to take increasing initiative in planning their work, so adding to their personal achievements. Teachers' expectations and the pace of lessons are satisfactory. A greater variety of methods to build progressively on students' knowledge would give them confidence to undertake more demanding tasks. Teachers give appropriate attention to presentation skills and monitor students' work thoroughly. Students' knowledge and understanding are extended with visits to galleries, which include aspects of contemporary practice.
184. The quality of leadership is satisfactory. The present accommodation, although improved with recent ICT facilities, is still inadequate for courses with the potential for a range of media choice. The library provision of good quality reference books is insufficient and does not meet the elements of knowledge and understanding needed for a subject with such a wide cultural base. The teachers understand developments in higher education and vocational routes in art and design. With stability of staff and a consistent approach to raising standards in appropriate courses of study, this department has the potential to be a successful area of the sixth form provision.

BUSINESS

Business education

Provision in business education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in the AVCE course is very good; in the general national vocational qualification (GNVQ) Intermediate course, achievement is good.
- Teaching is good overall with some very good features.
- Learning is consequently good and the students display a most positive approach.
- Leadership of the subject is good.
- Efforts to build and sustain links with business organisations in the local community need to be intensified.

Commentary

185. The courses provided in the sixth form are new. Currently there are students only in Year 12. Numbers are relatively small and there are fewer now than at the beginning of the course. There are no examination results to report on. Work seen in class and in folders indicates that at present standards are above average in the AVCE course. In the GNVQ intermediate course, standards are at least average. Work in assignments already completed is average for this stage. Students are achieving 'p' grades and above in the work on 'business enterprise', for example. They have a clear understanding of the nature of different levels of business activity.
186. At this stage, standards of literacy - especially in writing - are not as high as they should be, though this is offset to some degree by better keyboard skills. Much of the work is word-processed and this ensures greater accuracy in spelling and punctuation. In the advanced group, standards are similarly in line with expectations. Again, in assignments already completed, students are achieving 'E' grade criteria and above for some elements. In lessons, there is a good understanding of how business finance can be affected by both internal and external factors. To enable students to reach this level of understanding, planned and deliberate reference is made, for example, to the popular press and the financing of soccer

clubs in the 'Premiership'. This ensures that the subject remains relevant and easily related to the real world.

187. The majority of students on both courses have entered the sixth form with below average attainment in their GCSE examinations. The progress already made at this stage of their work indicates very good achievement for AVCE students and good progress for those on GNVQ courses. Moving up from below average GCSE points scores to present standards represents clear added value.
188. These levels of achievement have been reached as a result of consistently good teaching and the most positive student attitudes. All teachers know the subject very well and all lessons contain some very good features. Since teachers know their students well, they can set the pace and pattern of lessons in a way designed to enable all to be successful in making improvements. The tutorial style seen during the inspection is supportive in providing instant guidance on the tasks set. The pattern of the lessons - introduction and connection to earlier work followed by small scale research tasks using data-retrieval skills and concluding with a review of what has been learned - works very effectively. It ensures that students know what to do in order to improve and their response is mature, positive and eager. The nature of assessment is well understood by the students and expertly used by teachers to motivate them to make improvements on drafts already presented and thus maximise final grades.
189. The quality of leadership provided by a capable and committed head of department is good. The work of the department is well organised and there is a strong team approach. The leader has a clear vision on how the subject can develop as a central part of the school's sixth form. The monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning is a developing strength. Links with business are well founded at this stage though there is a need to seek an involvement with companies and/or individual small businesses that are part of the local community. The courses offered in the sixth form link very well with those available in the main school and provide a clear opportunity to continue a strong vocational strand throughout age 14-19. There is no evidence from previous reports on which to judge improvement but the success of business education students in the main school is already being built on. As more students are attracted to and retained on courses at both AVCE and GNVQ levels, there is clearly the capacity to contribute to the further development of the school.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	5	3
How inclusive the school is		1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	8	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	6	4
Overall standards achieved		4
Pupils' achievement	4	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		2
Attendance	5	5
Attitudes	4	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
The quality of education provided by the school		3
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well pupils learn	3	3
The quality of assessment	3	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	5	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		1
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	4	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	5	3
The leadership and management of the school		2
The governance of the school	5	4
The leadership of the headteacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	4	2
The effectiveness of management	4	2

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