

INSPECTION REPORT

Bexhill High School

Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex

LEA area: East Sussex

Unique reference number: 114595

Headteacher: Mike Conn

Lead inspector: Michael Miller

Dates of inspection: 29th November - 2nd December 2004

Inspection number: 268345

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1611
School address:	Down Road Bexhill-on-Sea East Sussex
Postcode:	TN39 4HT
Telephone number:	01424 730722
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Brian Kentfield
Date of previous inspection:	March 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Bexhill High School is situated in the seaside town of Bexhill in East Sussex. It is a community comprehensive secondary school, with specialist technology status, for students aged 11 to 16 (Years 7 to 11). It is much larger in size than most other secondary schools. There are 1,611 students on roll, 813 girls and 798 boys. The college is now larger than at the time of the previous inspection and is currently over-subscribed. The numbers entering the school after Year 7, and leaving the school before Year 11, are above average. Most students live locally within the catchment area and travel to school by foot or public transport. The attainment of students on entry to the school is below average. Most students are from white ethnic backgrounds. The percentage of students from other ethnic groups is average. The proportion of students who are at an early stage of learning English is low. Employment and unemployment rates in the area are both below the national average, as the area has an above average proportion of retired residents. At nearly 14 per cent, the proportion of students registered for free school meals is average. Some 19 per cent of students are on the register of special educational needs, which is above average. Most students on this register have social, emotional or behavioural difficulties, or moderate learning difficulties. The school has a specialist unit for students with dyslexia as a specific learning difficulty. At over 2 per cent, the proportion of students having full Statements of Special Educational Need is average. In 2003 the school gained a Sportsmark Award and a British Council International School Award for commitment to careers.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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9052	Helen Barter	Lay inspector	
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33525	Pam Fearnley	Team inspector	Science
31385	Neil Gillespie	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
24142	Sylvia Argyle	Team inspector	Art and design
31779	Vivian Harrison	Team inspector	Design and technology
32147	Ann Wallis	Team inspector	Geography
22458	Gilbert McGinn	Team inspector	Citizenship History
19026	Brian Downes	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages English as an additional language Special educational needs
31660	Marianne Young	Team inspector	Music
18888	Jan Boulton	Team inspector	Physical education Work-related learning
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Bexhill High School is a **satisfactorily effective** school, but has some particular strengths in the courses it offers to students and in its developing links with other local schools and colleges. Overall, the quality of education it provides for its students ensures it gives satisfactory value for money. The school shows a good determination to raise the achievement of the students and the standards they attain. It has a good approach to involving its students in its life and work.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Good teaching in Years 10 and 11 enables students to achieve well in examinations.
- The school provides students with a very good range of vocational and work-related courses.
- The monitoring of departments by senior and middle managers is not yet rigorous enough.
- Assessment is not used consistently enough to enhance challenge for more able students.
- Provision, standards and students' achievement are unsatisfactory in music.
- Provision for students with special educational needs is good overall and very good in the unit.
- Although there is good practice, some staff have difficulty in managing students' behaviour.
- Communication systems do not yet fully meet the needs of all groups of parents and carers.
- The poor quality of some accommodation on the main site restricts the quality of education.
- The headteacher is determined, aspirational and instrumental in securing school improvement.
- The school has very good and effective links with schools and colleges in the local consortium.

Improvement since the previous inspection, in March 1999, has been satisfactory overall. This relates to attendance, the raising of achievement and improvements in management. However, requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not met fully and there remain unsatisfactory aspects in the school's accommodation. Nevertheless, there has been good improvement in the school's use of its resources and in its provision for students with special educational needs.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

The attainment of students on entry to the school is below average. Students make good progress from Years 7 to 11 and their achievement is **good** overall. In 2003, attainment in national tests and examinations in Years 9 and 11 was average when compared with all schools nationally. However, students' attainment at GCSE was well above average when compared with schools whose students achieved similar standards in Year 9. Standards in literacy and students' competency in mathematics are average by Years 9 and 11 and their competency in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) is above average. The achievement of students with a special educational need is good. Those who are at an early stage of English language development achieve well. Students who have been identified as gifted or talented achieve satisfactorily. Students' attitudes, behaviour, personal development and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are **satisfactory**. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

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

*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.*

By Year 9, standards are average in English, mathematics, science, ICT, art, design and technology, history, modern foreign languages overall and in physical education. They are below average in other subjects, but attainment is well below average and students' achievement unsatisfactory in music. Achievement is good in mathematics, ICT, design and technology, history, Spanish and German. It is satisfactory in other subjects. By Year 11, standards are above average

in English, Science, ICT, geography, Spanish, German, examination course physical education and in vocational courses. Attainment is average in other subjects, but below expectations in religious education. Due to a lack of students' work, no judgement could be made on standards and achievement in music. Achievement is good in English, mathematics, science, ICT, design and technology, geography, history, Spanish, German, examination course physical education and in personal, social, health and citizenship education. It is very good in vocational courses. It is satisfactory in other subjects.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory**. Teaching and learning are **satisfactory** overall. Assessment and the curriculum are satisfactory overall. However, the quality of vocational courses in Years 10 and 11 is good and opportunities for work-related learning are very good. Opportunities for curricular enrichment are good. Resources for learning are good, but accommodation is unsatisfactory overall. The support, advice and guidance provided for students are good. Partnership links with parents are satisfactory, other links through the community are good and educational links with other schools and colleges are very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are **satisfactory** overall. Leadership of the headteacher is good. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis, but monitoring through senior and middle managers is not yet rigorous enough to ensure consistency of practice. Governance is satisfactory overall, with some significant strengths. However, the governing body does not meet fully its statutory duty to ensure a daily act of collective worship for all students and Year 10 students do not receive their full statutory entitlement to religious education.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are generally satisfied with the education offered to their children. They say that students are helped to settle well and are cared for well. They feel it is a school which shows commitment to its students and is striving to improve. However, not all are positive and some are critical of the systems of communication between the school and its parents. Some parents and students are concerned about poor behaviour, which affects students' learning and achievement. Parents and students alike are critical of the outdated facilities and accommodation on the main school site. Most students are positive about the activities on offer both in and out of the classroom and appreciate the resources available to them. They appreciate the headteacher's work in bringing about improvement. Inspectors agree with parents' and students' positive views. They, too, have concerns about some students' behaviour and judge that accommodation on the main site is unsatisfactory.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- develop further the systems of monitoring by senior and middle managers to improve rigour;
- improve the use of assessment data to target for improvement and challenge higher attainers;
- ensure all staff develop fully their behaviour management skills to support all groups of students;
- ensure improved provision in music in order to raise students' standards and achievement;
- continue the work of staff and governors to improve further communications with parents;
- continue to take all necessary steps to improve the quality of accommodation on the main site;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- ensure all Year 10 students receive their full statutory entitlement to religious education;
- meet fully the legal requirement for a daily act of collective worship for all students.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Achievement¹ is **good** overall. It is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Standards² in work and lessons seen by Years 9 and 11 are **average**, overall, when compared with expectations for all schools nationally.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall, students make good progress as they move through the school, from below average attainment on entry in Year 7.
- Students who are more able do not always achieve as well as they should in some subjects because the work is not sufficiently challenging.
- Overall, students with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well throughout Years 7 to 11.
- Unsatisfactory provision in music leads to unsatisfactory standards and achievement.
- Good provision in vocational and work-related courses enables students to achieve well.

Commentary

1. The school's main intake areas are ones of recognised social deprivation. The attainment of students on entry to Bexhill High School in Year 7 is below average. However, this is a school which enables its students to make good progress by the time they leave in Year 11 and, consequently, students' achievement is good overall. This is because the quality of teaching, particularly good in Years 10 and 11, and the good support for students with special educational needs support learning well. In 2003, attainment in national tests and examinations was average overall by Years 9 and 11, when compared with all schools nationally. Compared with similar schools³ nationally, attainment was well above average overall by Year 9 and above average by Year 11. However, students' attainment at GCSE was well above average when compared with schools whose pupils attained similar standards two years previously in Year 9.
2. The school sets itself ambitious targets for success in national tests and public examinations. These targets are usually higher than the levels of attainment predicted for the students and those targets set by the local education authority. Nevertheless, although the school sometimes falls short of its targets, the high standards set are indicative of the school's determination to provide both challenge for itself and its students in order to raise their self-value and self-esteem. An analysis of students' performance overall shows that there are no significant differences between the achievement of boys and girls. Overall, this is a school which is well focused on raising students' achievement.
3. Standards in literacy and students' competency in mathematics are average by Years 9 and 11. Students' competency in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) is above average, overall, by Years 9 and 11. The achievement of students with special educational needs is good overall in relation to their prior attainment. Where students are withdrawn from lessons, the reasons for doing so are well considered and the students concerned often achieve very well. Those whose mother tongue is not English, or who are at an early stage of English language development, achieve well. There are small number of refugees in the school, who have achieved well because they have been supported well by both staff and local education authority services. There are no students in school who are

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

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

³ Similar schools are those with a similar proportion of students entitled to free school meals.

travellers. Students who are identified as gifted or talented achieve satisfactorily overall, but achieve well where there are special courses for them. However, the school's programme to raise further the achievement of potentially higher attaining students is not fully developed within subjects.

4. Provision for students in the special unit for students with specific learning difficulties is very good. Consequently, these students achieve well as a result of this specialist support. When included with their peers in subjects across the curriculum, their achievement is always at least good and sometimes very good. The school organises a good mixture of withdrawal and in-class support to help students with specific learning difficulties with their spelling and reading. They are included fully with their peers in mainstream classes, where they receive good support from a specialist teacher or a trained teaching assistant.
5. At the time of the inspection, only limited national data was available to compare the school's performance with other schools for the teachers' assessments, tests and public examinations held in 2004. National comparisons are, therefore, made using data from 2003, the latest year for which such validated information is available. However, where national data is available for 2004, as published by the Department for Education and Skills on its website⁴, this has been referred to wherever possible in order to make comparisons with 2003.

Key Stage 3 (Years 7 to 9)

6. Overall, since the previous inspection, the school's rate of improvement has been in line with that seen nationally. Over the three years from 2001 to 2003, the standards attained in the core⁵ subjects were average overall for both girls and boys. Standards of attainment in the 2003 national tests were average in English and science for students gaining the expected Level 5⁶ or higher and above average in mathematics. For those gaining a higher Level 6 or above, standards were average in English and mathematics and above average in science. Compared with the standards the students achieved at the end of Year 6, progress was good.
7. At the time of the inspection, 2004 national data was only available for mathematics and science. This shows standards, overall, appear to have fallen to below average for the percentage of students gaining the expected Level 5 or higher. However, there were high absence levels on the days of the national tests in 2004, up to 10 per cent for the English test, which have affected overall results. From the reasons for absence provided by the parents, the school has not been able to explain this phenomenon to its own satisfaction as its records show it was unusual. Furthermore, no parents withdrew their children from the tests, and school analysis shows absences went across ability ranges. However, the underlying results for those who actually took the tests show previous standards being maintained. Consequently, the students' progress from Year 6 to Year 9 appears to remain good overall.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.1 (34.0)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	36.2 (34.1)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	34.3 (33.0)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 320 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

⁴ See: www.standards.dfes.gov.uk

⁵ The National Curriculum core subjects are English, mathematics and science. The foundation subjects are: art and design; design and technology; geography; history; ICT; modern foreign languages; music and physical education. In addition, religious education is taught to the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus.

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

8. Inspection judgements are that standards are average by Year 9 in English, mathematics, science, ICT, art and design, design and technology, history and in physical education. In modern foreign languages they are average overall, being average in French, but above average for those taking Spanish and German. Attainment is below average in geography and the school's personal, social, health and citizenship education course. Standards are below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education, but achievement is satisfactory. Attainment is well below average and students' achievement unsatisfactory in music. Achievement is satisfactory in English, science, art and design, geography, French, physical education and in the personal, social, health and citizenship education course. It is good in mathematics, ICT, design and technology, history, Spanish and German.

Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11)

9. Whilst there are slight differences in performance from year to year, the overall results for the three years 2001-2003 were average by Year 11, compared with all schools nationally. As seen nationally, girls results were higher than those of boys overall. However, in 2003 the proportion of students gaining A*-C passes at GCSE was above average for all schools, well above average for similar schools and in the highest 5 per cent nationally when compared with schools whose pupils had similar prior attainment in Year 9. Consequently, the progress made between Years 9 and 11 for those students gaining five or more passes at A*-C was very good. It was also very good for students gaining one or more A*-G passes. Nevertheless, the percentage of students gaining higher A* and A passes was below average in most subjects, but above average overall in communication studies, English literature, German, physical education and in Spanish.
10. The provisional national data published for 2004 indicates the proportion of students gaining five or more A*-C passes was similar to the national average. The proportion of students gaining one or more A*-G passes was above average. However, results in 2004 were lowered overall by some unsatisfactory achievement in mathematics. This was largely as a result of staffing and teaching difficulties. However, since September 2004 there is basically a new mathematics department at the school. Nevertheless, overall, in spite of the issues in mathematics, students continue to make good progress and achieve well overall through Years 10 and 11.

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	58 (51)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	83 (85)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	32.9 (32.2)	34.7 (34.8)

There were 253 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

11. Inspection judgements show that standards are above average by Year 11 in English, Science, ICT, geography, Spanish, German, examination course physical education and in vocational courses. Attainment is average in mathematics, art and design, design and technology, history, French, core physical education and in the school's personal, social, health and citizenship education course. Standards are below the expectation of the locally

agreed syllabus for religious education. Due to a lack of students' work in music, no judgement could be made on standards attained. Achievement is satisfactory in art and design, French, core physical education and in religious education. It is good in English, mathematics, science, ICT, design and technology, geography, history, Spanish, German, examination course physical education and in personal, social, health and citizenship education. It is very good in vocational courses.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes and behaviour are **satisfactory** overall. Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is **satisfactory**. Attendance and punctuality are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The majority of students have positive attitudes to school life.
- The unsatisfactory attitudes to learning and behaviour of a significant group of students disrupt the learning of others.
- Some teachers do not manage students' behaviour well enough.
- The school's strategies for dealing with bullying are good.
- The school's provision for students' personal development is weakened because not all tutors carry out the requirement to ensure a daily act of collective worship for all students.
- Recent changes to the school's systems have resulted in problems relating to the accurate monitoring of attendance and punctuality.

Commentary

12. The great majority of students like the school and are positive about the activities on offer both in and out of the classroom and appreciate the resources available to them, particularly computers, which help them to learn. They appreciate the headteacher's work in bringing about improvement and in raising the status of the school. Students have some concerns about the quality of teaching, particularly where teachers do not have enough class control, but overall they feel they are helped to learn and to achieve well. Year 7 students like their accommodation, although this is not the case for other year groups who are critical of the outdated facilities at the main site. Students attending Bexhill College are very positive about the opportunity to study practical skills in preparation for work.
13. Those students who behave well do so because they understand the need to follow the school rules. They behave well when lessons are well managed and interesting. This is particularly evident in science, art and ICT lessons. However, some students enter the school with low levels of social skills, which is a significant barrier to their learning. This leads to undisciplined behaviour, often resulting in exclusion. In a recent survey, students and staff expressed concern about the disruptive behaviour of some students. Students told inspectors that they did not like the poor behaviour of these students, which disrupts their learning. Not all teachers have developed fully the necessary behaviour management skills, in line with the school policy and approach, to deal consistently well with such behaviour.
14. In common with other students, those with special educational needs show, overall, satisfactory attitudes to work. Students identified as gifted or talented also show satisfactory attitudes and behaviour. The good attitudes to work of students who speak English as an additional language are a feature of the good progress they have made.
15. In the specialist unit the positive attitudes of students with specific learning difficulties to their work make a valuable contribution to their good achievement. Their good behaviour results in productivity in learning because they do not waste time in lessons. With specialist support, students with additional behavioural difficulties remain on task because they are interested and excited by the wide range of activities they are given to support them in their learning. Consequently, in such lessons, they co-operate well and are focused on their activities, which they enjoy, and so learn well.

16. Good work is taking place across the school, in consultation with staff and students, on anti-bullying strategies, which are having a good impact on the reduction of incidents. Students say that bullying does occur, but they feel confident in reporting their concerns and that staff will deal effectively with them. They are very positive about the peer mentors and student listeners as people to turn to if they have any worries.
17. Students' personal development is satisfactory, with some strengths in the provision for their social and moral development. Their spiritual and cultural awareness has improved since the previous inspection, although the school has not met fully the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship. Assemblies provide good opportunities for students to reflect on their own and others' lives. They have empathy, for example, for the plight of children in Africa affected by Aids and reflect solemnly on the death of a student, in another school, as a result of bullying. However, tutor times are not used as effectively as assemblies to promote students' spiritual awareness and there is insufficient focus on how an act of collective worship might be included. There are good opportunities for students to take responsibility around the school as prefects, school council members and through charity work for the community. Some subjects contribute well to students' social and moral awareness, such as history where they explore the morality of slavery and in ICT where teachers use themes such as bullying and smoking to promote understanding of right and wrong. Students' cultural awareness is promoted satisfactorily through the curriculum and through extra-curricular activities, including support for their partner school in Uganda.

Attendance

18. The school has a satisfactory rate of attendance in line with national figures. Attendance has improved satisfactorily since the previous inspection. Procedures are in place for monitoring attendance and punctuality, but they are not sufficiently rigorous. Tutors mark registers correctly, but there are concerns over the correct number of students on roll in each class being updated accurately on a day-to-day basis. This is because of recent changes in the school's computerised system. Furthermore, not all staff challenge absence from their lessons rigorously enough. There is a good deal of parental condoned absence and taking students out of school for holidays. Truancy is still a problem with a minority of students, not helped by the split-site situation and the main site being difficult to patrol.
19. Punctuality is satisfactory overall. The greater majority of students arrive at school and attend lessons on time. Despite the best efforts of the school, a minority of students arrive late in the mornings and miss registration or assembly time. Punctuality can be an issue when students and staff are travelling between sites.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	7.0	School data:	0.9
National data:	7.2	National data:	1.1

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

20. The number of fixed term exclusions is higher than would be expected for a school of this size. They reflect the challenging behaviour of a significant proportion of the school's population and the school's policy, firmly implemented by headteacher and governors, of 'zero-tolerance' towards those students who exhibit violence or aggression towards other students and staff.

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	1183	99	4
White – Irish	1	4	0
White – any other White background	24	3	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	8	1	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	14	4	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	6	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	5	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	3	1	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Chinese	3	0	0
Any other ethnic group	24	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	321	50	2

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Overall, the quality of education provided by the school is **satisfactory**. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The curriculum is satisfactory overall. Opportunities for curriculum enrichment are good overall. Resources for learning are good, but accommodation is unsatisfactory overall. The support, advice and guidance provided for students are good. Partnership links with parents are satisfactory, other links through the community are good and educational links with other schools and colleges are very good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is **satisfactory** and learning is **satisfactory** overall. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. The assessment of students' work is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use resources well to support students' learning throughout Years 7 to 11.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge, particularly in Years 10 and 11, encourages students' interest in learning.
- Some teachers do not give students sufficient opportunity to become involved fully in lessons.
- Gifted or talented students are not always provided with sufficient challenge in their learning.
- Assessment does not always tell students what to do next to improve their work further.
- In the special educational needs unit, staff provide very good teaching and students from the unit are fully integrated into all aspects of school life.

Commentary

21. In Years 7 to 9 teaching and learning are good in mathematics, ICT, design and technology, history, Spanish and German. They are satisfactory in English, science, art and design, geography, French, physical education, religious education, and in the school's personal, social, health and citizenship education course. Teaching and learning are unsatisfactory in music.
22. In Years 10 and 11 teaching and learning are very good in the school's vocational courses. They are good in English, mathematics, science, ICT, design and technology, geography, history, Spanish, German and in the personal, social, health and citizenship education course. They are satisfactory in art and design, French, physical education and in religious education. For reasons explained in Part C, it was not possible to make any judgement concerning teaching or learning in music.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 144 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
6 (4%)	31 (22%)	52 (36%)	45 (31%)	10 (7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

23. Whilst teaching and learning were good or better in just over half of lessons seen in Years 7 to 9, the proportion was over two-thirds in Years 10 and 11. In the vocational courses in Years 10 and 11, teachers' command of their subjects is particularly thorough and secure. Consequently, the effectiveness of teaching methods, use of resources and pace of lessons engages students' interest more and they become more involved in their learning. Overall, most teachers use homework satisfactorily to reinforce learning. However, inspectors agree with parents that not all teachers use homework regularly or consistently enough, or provide sufficiently challenging homework.
24. Some unsatisfactory teaching and learning was seen in mathematics, French, geography, music, physical education, religious education, and in the personal, social, health and citizenship education course. Here, there tend to be weaknesses in individual teachers' planning which does not provide fully for the needs of all students, including those who are gifted or talented. This sometimes leads to unsatisfactory behaviour or attitudes to learning, which are not managed well enough by the teachers concerned. Even where learning is satisfactory overall, there is a tendency for some teachers to talk too much and not give students sufficient opportunity to contribute to lessons. This comes back to planning and the fact that not all teachers have designed successful enough strategies to maintain pace consistently well over the 100-minute double lessons.
25. Nevertheless, examples of very good and excellent teaching and learning were seen across a range of subjects and year groups. Excellent teaching and learning were seen in English, mathematics, science, drama and in design and technology. In such lessons, students are

given the confidence to learn through being encouraged to participate fully in lessons and become effectively involved in the evaluation of their learning. In the very best lessons, teachers have high expectations of the students and inspire and motivate them very well. Such lessons make a very good contribution to the students' personal, as well as academic, development. This is because students are enabled to work co-operatively, consider their learning thoughtfully and creativity is encouraged.

26. Teaching for students with special educational needs is good overall. Where students are withdrawn for extra tuition, teaching is often very good. Consequently, students learn and develop their basic skills and understanding well, especially in Years 7 to 9. All staff have had good training to implement the 2001 Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs⁷. Individual education plans for students who have special educational needs are good and contain suitably specific targets to enable students to make progress. There are good procedures to assess the progress and development of students with special educational needs and to enable targets to be set or adjusted accordingly. Teaching assistants provide very effective and caring support for students. Teaching for students who speak English as an additional language is good. They are supported very well by both teachers and teaching assistants and learn English quickly.
27. Teaching of students identified as gifted or talented is satisfactory. Although there is good practice in some subjects, such as mathematics, teachers in general do not pay enough attention to planning for these students. Nevertheless, where students who are identified as gifted or talented have extra courses available they learn well and develop a good range of skills and understanding of more advanced topics. Learning overall for these students is satisfactory because teaching is not consistently good enough to raise standards for them.
28. Teaching and learning for students with specific learning difficulties are good overall, but range from excellent to satisfactory. The best teaching is characterised by cracking pace, high expectations, excellent match of activities to the needs of the students and an outstandingly good knowledge and understanding of the difficulties experienced by students with dyslexic tendencies. Because activities are structured effectively to meet students' particular needs, the students make good gains with their spelling and reading. Effective use is made of students' individual education plans to support the planning of lessons and to monitor the small stepped gains students make. On the rare occasion when teaching is satisfactory, the teaching assistant is not drawn on sufficiently to support students with specific learning difficulties when they are included with their peers in lessons.
29. Assessment for students who have special educational needs is good. Good procedures for collecting data enable staff to set targets and adjust individual education plans as necessary. Because these plans lie at the heart of the successful teaching of students with specific learning difficulties, their progress is monitored well against their specified targets. However, in some subjects, a lack of specific planning for gifted or talented students means assessment data and information is not used to set challenging enough targets for these students.
30. Marking overall, by the majority of teachers, is regular and up-to-date in most subjects. Assessment is used well to track the achievement of all students in science, mathematics and English and is sufficient in other subjects to show students what they have achieved. Assessment is very good in science in Years 10 and 11. However, in Years 7 to 9 performance data is not used effectively. These students do not have sufficient information to tell them how to progress to the next stage in their learning, particularly in religious education, art and design, music and physical education. Neither is assessment being used consistently well across the school to enable teachers to further challenge more able students. The school is aware of the issues relating to assessment and has developed a new system which will be operational soon.

⁷ Code of Practice – this gives practical advice to schools and local education authorities about their responsibilities, duties and tasks to ensure that pupils who have special educational needs receive the most appropriate help and support to further their learning and personal development. This is a statutory duty under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001.

The curriculum

The overall quality of the curriculum is **satisfactory**. The opportunity for enrichment, including out-of-school activities, is **good**. Overall, the quality and quantity of resources to meet the needs of the curriculum are **satisfactory**. Accommodation is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The provision for vocational education, including work-related education, is very good and is making a positive impact towards raising standards, particularly those of older students.
- There is good and inclusive provision for students who do not find learning easy.
- The current timetabled provision in Years 7 to 9 in English, art and design, music and physical education is having a detrimental effect on students' learning.
- The provision for music in Years 7 to 9 and for religious education for Year 10 students fails to meet fully the requirements of the National Curriculum.
- The development of the Technology College initiative is leading to innovative practice.
- The comprehensive programme of enrichment and of out-of-school activities has a good effect on students' learning.
- The poor quality of some accommodation on the main site restricts the variety of lessons which can be taught in music and physical education.

Commentary

31. Vocational provision for students in Years 10 and 11 has been growing steadily in the last two years and is now very good. Students are able to follow a wide variety courses leading to different qualifications. Uptake of vocational courses is very high, with approximately three-quarters of all students choosing to follow at least one vocational course. Progress of students on these courses is good and in the GNVQ science course students have managed to secure a good percentage of pass grades. Very good links have been established with the local colleges so that students are taught at both the school and at colleges.
32. Participation in the Technology College initiative is enabling the school to develop exciting innovative approaches within the curriculum. New courses such as psychology and sociology are being introduced. Some students are currently piloting a project which will enable them to take their assessment tests at the end of Year 8 instead of Year 9. The provision for personal, social and health education across the school is satisfactory. The programme links to the new citizenship curriculum and students are encouraged well to discuss a variety of ethical, moral and social issues, both in their citizenship lessons and in other subjects.
33. There is insufficient time for music within the current timetable arrangements, resulting in issues of non-compliance with the requirements of the National Curriculum for music. Similarly, the school is failing to meet fully the statutory requirements for the teaching of religious education to Year 10 students. Whilst some faculties have welcomed the opportunity to teach double lessons of 100 minutes duration, these are causing problems for the teaching of English, art and design, music and physical education.
34. Students with special educational needs, those identified as gifted or talented and students who speak English as an additional language have satisfactory access to the same curriculum as other students and to all aspects of the school's activities. Students with specific learning

difficulties experience a good range of courses, which is flexible and tailor-made to meet their needs. The curriculum for these students is good.

35. Students are provided with a good range of opportunities to enrich their learning. This is achieved through participation in a well co-ordinated programme of creative, cultural and physical activities involving both cross-curricular and departmental initiatives. For example, field trips and visits support students' learning in geography, history and modern foreign languages. After-school help to develop more independent learning and critical thinking skills is provided well for higher-attaining students at one of the local colleges. Lunchtime and after-school clubs are supported well, particularly by students in Year 7. Visits and international tours are well established. Rugby and water sports teams have visited France and ski trips have been organised to Spain. The school offers students a good range of competitive sports as well as non-competitive clubs in gymnastics, dance and trampolining. Music and drama activities benefit from the support of expertise from outside the school.

Accommodation, resources and staffing

36. Whilst accommodation for Year 7 students is good, the poor quality of some accommodation on the main site restricts the variety of lessons which can be taught, particularly in music and physical education. Music rooms are shabby and lacking in storage space, whilst small, cramped and dirty accommodation for physical education restricts what can be taught in these lessons, despite very good resources. Dirty floors in art and design detract from the very good display of students' work within the art rooms.
37. The school has a satisfactory level of resources to support teaching and learning. However, there is a good level of provision for ICT, with computers and digital resources. Within science, mathematics and in design and technology this is provided for well in dedicated rooms. However, access to computers is difficult for history, religious education and the expressive arts faculty. The library⁸ facilities are strengths of learning resources.
38. Despite the significant turnover of staff within the last two years, the school has successfully managed a programme of staff development. This has enabled teaching assistants to become more effective in supporting the learning of students in the classroom and in understanding strategies for behaviour management. The school has good induction arrangements for staff and has developed very good links with local universities.
39. Teachers of students with specific learning difficulties are well qualified. The class bases used for small group work provide a good working environment for students. However, the lack of an additional room makes one-to-one counselling very difficult for some of these students. Furthermore, there is no specific space for a student to go in order to calm down when agitated or frustrated because of some difficulty she or he may be experiencing. The learning resources to support students with specific learning difficulties are good.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for students' care, welfare, health and safety is **good**. They are provided with **good** support, advice and guidance. There are **good** opportunities for students to express their views about the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school works very effectively with all agencies concerned with students' welfare.
- Students with special educational needs are supported well.
- Good working relationships enable the support and guidance provided by the school to be valued by the students.

⁸ Referred to within the school as the Independent Learning Centres (ILC).

- The use of target-setting to help students know how to improve is not used sharply enough by some teachers and departments.
- The school consults well with its students and takes their views seriously.

Commentary

40. The school cares well for its students. It understands their different needs well and uses its very good links with outside care agencies to support individual students' difficulties. This work is made particularly effective by high-quality liaison between the educational welfare officer based at the school and the heads of houses and their administrative teams. Regular weekly monitoring of individual students' attendance identifies where there are problems and where students might need additional support in school, in lessons or at home. Procedures to support and monitor the welfare of students who are in public care are good. Child protection procedures are satisfactory. At the time of the inspection there was no nominated governor with responsibility for child protection. However, shortly after the inspection this situation was rectified with the appointment of a highly qualified member of the governing body. Consequently, the school now meets fully statutory requirements for child protection matters. Arrangements for ensuring the health and safety of students are good, although the changing rooms for physical education do not meet acceptable hygiene standards.
41. Most parents and carers feel that their children are cared for well, but have concerns about behaviour. The majority of parents and carers are satisfied with the welfare and support provided for their children and feel comfortable in approaching the school if they have any concerns. However, a significant number of parents are worried about bullying. Students, too, have concerns but, overall, say bullying is dealt with well and that student listeners and the '1-2-1' support club are helpful to them when they are worried. Inspectors agree that support strategies are good. This is particularly because there is a clear focus on developing students' confidence to ask for help, to report concerns about bullying to staff and to seek support from prefects and peer mentors. Students are rightly concerned about the way in which behaviour is managed in some lessons and the impact which this can have on their sense of well-being and the quality of support and guidance offered to them.
42. Good working relationships help students to have confidence when talking to staff and to be receptive to advice and guidance. Most teachers offer students good support, advice and guidance, both in lessons and in feedback to them when marking their work. However, not all subject departments use target-setting rigorously enough to help students learn how to improve their work. In addition, through a recent survey of students and staff, the school recognises that the merit system, which is designed to encourage and reward good and improved work, loses its impact beyond Year 8 and is in need of review. Students are provided with good advice and guidance when making choices about future studies within or beyond the school. Induction procedures into Years 7 and 8 are good.
43. Students who have special educational needs, those who speak English as an additional language and students who are refugees are very well supported by all staff in school and by local education authority services. This is a strong contributory factor in the good progress they make.
44. Support, advice and guidance for students in the unit for specific learning difficulties are good. This results in good personal development as these students begin to make friendships with their peers. This is because they understand the importance of listening to the point of view and concerns of others. They gain confidence in making good eye contact when speaking to somebody and the importance of body language. Their progress is monitored well and this monitoring of achievement shapes new targets at the annual review stage. Procedures for annual reviews are good.
45. The school has improved and is developing further opportunities for students to air their views and to bring about improvement in school life. The committee structure of the school council is an effective method of helping councillors to focus on important areas, such as

communication and behaviour. There is good and on-going consultation with all students through the anti-bullying initiative and the current review of behaviour management. For example, improved behaviour in corridors and staircases has resulted from students' reported concerns about overcrowding.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

There are **satisfactory** links with parents, most of whom have **satisfactory** views of the school. Links with other schools and colleges are **very good**. Links with the community are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most parents like the school and are appreciative of its work to improve the quality of education for all in the town.
- The school is working hard to develop improved communication systems with parents.
- Arrangements in consultation evenings do not fully meet the needs of all parents and carers.
- The school's role in the local community is increasingly influential.

Commentary

46. Parents are generally satisfied with the education offered to their children. They say students are helped to settle well and are well cared for. Most parents feel it is easy to approach the school with any concerns. However, not all are positive. A few parents are concerned about poor behaviour that affects students' learning and achievement, the unsatisfactory accommodation and the communication between the school and its parents. Nevertheless, they are positive about the enthusiasm engendered in the students by the school through, for example, art, sport and the work of the school council. They feel it is a school which has commitment to its students and is striving to improve. Inspectors agree with parents' positive views. Nonetheless, inspectors too have concerns about some students' behaviour and agree that the accommodation on the main site is unsatisfactory.
47. Inspectors consider that, whilst satisfactory overall, the school is making good progress in developing its communication with parents. Good quality newsletters, magazines and a website give parents good information about the school's development and students' achievements. The availability of the headteacher to meet parents at weekly evening sessions and monthly Saturday mornings is a good example of the school's willingness to listen to parents' views. The development of subject evenings and discussion groups is also good. However, the reporting of students' progress in end-of-year reports by some teachers is not always sufficiently informative or sharp enough. Tutor consultation evenings do not meet some parents' wishes to discuss their children's progress with individual subject teachers, rather than tutors, particularly in Years 10 and 11.
48. The school meets the requirements of the 2001 Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs to involve parents and students in discussions and target-setting. Formal and informal links with parents of students who have special educational needs are good and parents are appreciative of the efforts made by the school. Contacts with parents of students who speak English as an additional language are good and supported by native speakers both in the community and the local education authority.
49. Partnership with parents and carers of students with specific learning difficulties is good. Procedures for students' annual reviews are good and effectively involve their parents and carers, who are given good opportunities to be involved in the shaping of the targets on students' individual education plans. Links with other schools and colleges to support students with specific learning difficulties are good. Effective links with feeder primary schools to support the transfer of these students from Year 6 to Year 7 ensure their induction is good and there is successful continuity in their education through to Year 11. Effective links with the

community and good relationships ensure that students with specific learning difficulties are suitably placed for work experience and that they are given good quality support when out on these work experience placements.

50. The school makes good use of the local area and community to enrich the curriculum. Links with local businesses for sponsorship and for work experience are good. Family link workers provide highly valued contact with parents, carers and the local community. The school is proactive in its work with the police to prevent crime and to develop facilities for the local youth. The school plays host to the community's Bexhill FM Radio station and participates fully in the town's activities; for example, students have helped to plan and build the bandstand.
51. The school's work within the Bexhill Consortium to improve the quality of education for all in the town is one of its outstanding features and is appreciated by parents, students and staff. There are strong and positive links with the eight feeder primary schools and the other secondary school. These links provide students with good opportunities to work together and for staff to share expertise across the different phases of education. Links with Bexhill and Hastings Colleges are very good and make a significant contribution to the breadth and increased flexibility of the curriculum on offer to students in Years 10 and 11.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, the leadership and management of the school are **satisfactory**. The headteacher's leadership is **good**. The leadership of other key staff is **satisfactory** overall. Governance and the work of the governors are **satisfactory** overall, but the governing body does not meet fully its statutory requirements. The provision for collective worship, and the teaching of religious education in Year 10, are not met fully.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The determined and aspirational leadership of the headteacher provides clear vision and direction for the school.
- Monitoring of the work of departments by senior and middle managers is not yet rigorous enough to ensure consistency of practice.
- Governors are supportive of the school and work closely with the headteacher.
- Senior and middle managers are not making full use of performance data.
- There is very good leadership of vocational subjects and special educational needs.
- The school provides good professional development opportunities for experienced staff, newly qualified teachers and teacher trainees.
- The management of the music department is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

52. The leadership of the headteacher is good because it is determined, aspirational and clearly focused on raising standards. Consequently, clear strategic thinking and good future planning make the best use of available resources and utilise the strengths of staff well. Furthermore, good leadership creates effective partnership arrangements through the local consortium of schools and colleges, which extends and enhances the work of the school. The headteacher's leadership has ensured senior managers have well-defined roles and responsibilities. Together, they are making satisfactory progress in implementing the school's priorities for improvement in order to establish a more productive climate for learning. Overall, the leadership of key staff is satisfactory, but leadership of departments is good in creating effective teams and providing good role models for staff and students. There are particular strengths of leadership in special educational needs and vocational courses, which provide examples of good practice within the school.
53. The management of the school is satisfactory because the school day runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis and procedures are clear. However, the absence through illness of the headteacher during the previous academic year and his subsequent secondment by the local

education authority to support another local school had a detrimental effect on school development. Nevertheless, some new policies are not implemented consistently across the whole school. There are inconsistencies in the effectiveness of middle managers and subject staff. This is because procedures for monitoring their work, including the line management of departments, are not yet rigorous enough to ensure consistent good practice. There are systems in place for the collection, analysis and use of performance data, but the systems are not sufficiently robust and accurate to bring about improvement across the whole school. There are significant weaknesses in the management of music, which the school is attempting to resolve through local consortium arrangements.

54. The work of the governors is satisfactory overall. Governors show good commitment and support for the school and understand its main strengths and weaknesses. They work closely with the headteacher, ensuring an increasingly productive partnership. Consequently, governors keep a careful watch on the progress of initiatives for improvement and are active in holding the school to account. They work efficiently through a well-organised committee system, which capitalises well on their individual expertise. This good expertise is now being used to develop the whole governing body. However, there are insufficient links between governors and subject departments for the governing body to be informed fully about the standards being attained. The school does not fully meet the statutory requirements for the provision of religious education in Year 10 or consistently provide a daily act of collective worship in the school.
55. The school is committed to staff development and there are effective induction procedures in place for new staff. Difficulties in recruiting staff have proved a barrier to students' achievement. However, the school has forged good links with local training institutions and makes a significant contribution to the training of new teachers. These initiatives are helping to ease recruitment problems.
56. The learning support manager and senior management of the school have shown very good leadership in developing the 2001 Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs. The learning support manager has led staff training well with a good deal of skill and expertise. Such training is a strong factor in the good progress made by students with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language. The co-ordinators for provision for gifted or talented students have shown satisfactory leadership in establishing a register of these students and in beginning to develop provision for them.
57. The management of provision for students with special educational needs and those who speak English as an additional language is good. The school has good procedures and administration for special educational needs and English as an additional language. Management of provision for students identified as gifted or talented is satisfactory. A register is in place and procedures are now being developed, but have yet to have a substantial effect on standards. There are two link governors for special educational needs and English as an additional language, who have only recently been appointed. They are operating satisfactorily, but have not yet had time to fully develop their roles. Statutory requirements for special educational needs are fully met.
58. The leadership and management of the provision for students with specific learning difficulties are good. The funding allocated for students with specific learning difficulties is well targeted and makes a very valuable contribution to their good achievement. The specialist facility for specific learning difficulties was not inspected as an entity at the previous inspection, so no overall judgement about change since then can be made.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	Balances (£)
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Total income	5,778,657	Balance from previous year	343,028
Total expenditure	5,494,105	Balance carried forward to the next	627,580
Expenditure per pupil	3,449		

59. There are efficient and effective systems in place for the management of finance. Regular updates on the school's financial position are reported to governors and departmental spending is monitored closely. The school currently has a larger than normal financial surplus. However, this is satisfactorily accounted for in terms of contingency for staffing costs, planned investment in ICT improvements and earmarked funds for local consortium developments. Financial planning is based well on best value principles and the school provides satisfactory value for money overall.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning

Provision for work-related learning is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school offers a very wide range of vocational courses.
- Very good opportunities are provided for students to attend local colleges.
- Year 10 work experiences are organised well.
- A good and developing programme of careers education is provided in citizenship lessons.
- The leadership of the work-related courses is very good.
- Work-related learning has not yet been well enough established in all subjects.

Commentary

60. The very good leadership of work-related learning has led to a rapid expansion in courses and partnerships. The curriculum is matched well to the diverse needs of students in Years 10 and 11 and meets fully statutory requirements. The school offers a good range of applied vocational GCSE and GNVQ courses, whilst other vocational courses are taught at two local colleges. Students achieve well across this range of courses. Furthermore, the school also offers good opportunities through work-based learning which helps well a small number of students develop specific employment skills. The provision for students to study vocational courses is very good and 75 per cent of students in Years 10 and 11 take the opportunities offered.
61. All Year 10 students experience a well-organised two-week work placement. This mainly enables students to learn well through work. However, unfortunately, the local area cannot provide a sufficient number of challenging placements and a few students are not stimulated by the experience. Nevertheless, students on vocational courses are all placed in work which is linked well to their courses. The new programme of careers education, in weekly citizenship lessons, is developing well. The support provided by the local careers service is very good.
62. The quality of teaching and learning observed on the vocational courses was very good. Teachers have very good subject expertise and an enthusiasm for their subject, which helps students well to learn about work. Teachers set good, interactive tasks which encourage students to draw upon their own experiences. Support assistants provide very good help in these lessons. For example, in the sports course two assistants circulated well, enabling students to extend literacy and ICT skills. Year 11 students taking the leisure and tourism course have produced very well-presented assignment work. Students gain confidence and self-esteem from the practical elements of their learning. Several students on college courses successfully gained a modern apprenticeship at the end of their studies.

63. The school is forward thinking and has conducted a thorough audit of work-related learning. Although most subjects are involved in the teaching of vocational courses, a few subjects have not yet incorporated aspects of work-related learning into their planning. There is a further weakness in that the senior manager responsible for leading the very innovative work-related curriculum does not have overall responsibility for monitoring the course outcomes.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership is remedying some weaknesses in organisation and management.
- In English literature, good progress is made by most students to achieve above average results by the end of Year 11.
- In Years 10 and 11 there is highly expert teaching in some lessons.
- There are too few opportunities for high-quality writing of sustained length in Years 7 to 9.
- Assessment in Years 7 to 9 does not provide students with informative guidance as to how to improve their work.
- Management of lesson time and of large high-ability classes does not always ensure all students work productively at maximum pace.

Commentary

64. GCSE results in 2003 were average for English language. They were significantly above average in the literature examination at A*-C levels, including an above national average proportion of students gaining higher A* and A passes. Although results in 2004 were not as high, attainment was average in both examinations. Compared with performance in other GCSE subjects, students do well in literature, but boys do less well in language. National test results at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were average. The percentage gaining the expected Level 5 or above fell to below average in 2004. Nevertheless, overall results have improved over the last five years at a similar rate to the national trend. During the inspection, standards were above average in Years 10 and 11 and average in Years 7 to 9, with a significant proportion below average. However, for most Year 9 students this represents sound progress and satisfactory achievement from the level at which they begin Year 7. Achievement is good in Years 10 and 11.
65. In Years 10 and 11, students achieve well because their work is well organised. Consequently, they write with accuracy and interest, as a result of thoughtful drafting guided by sound marking. However, the work of students in Years 7 to 9 is often limited to lists or numbered answers and carelessness is evident in presentation and accuracy. In some lessons, not all students in large higher-ability sets are fully involved in answering questions. Students with special educational needs make good progress throughout Years 7 to 11 and some boys are achieving well in special small classes. Students with English as an additional language achieve well and receive effective support when necessary. However, the needs of gifted or talented students are not always being met sufficiently well.
66. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. They are good in Years 10 and 11, where some outstanding teaching takes place. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen and teaching and learning are improving in Years 7 to 9. Overall, teachers' questioning probes and develops well the students' learning. Nevertheless, learning is sometimes constrained by the management of time in lessons. The 100-minute double lessons sometimes lead to excessive talking by the teacher or too much time spent reading, so too little demand is made of the students. In the large higher-ability groups the structure of some lessons does not guarantee all students are fully engaged with their work.
67. In the lessons which are better than satisfactory, sharp pace is maintained with prescribed deadlines and clear signals of when and how activity is to change. In the best lessons, mainly

in Years 10 and 11, expert teaching is based on good, informative assessment. In the very best lessons the teacher shares passion and insight about the text with students in a way which provides high-quality opportunities for spiritual reflection, for example, when a speech by John F. Kennedy was associated with a poem about a dead leader by Walt Whitman. The free flow of communication between teacher and students could be seen clearly in some first-class essays displayed on the wall of one of the classrooms.

68. ICT is sometimes used well to enhance the presentation of work and is helpful to some students with special educational needs. However, students sometimes waste time on presentation at the expense of content. There is little evidence of effective drafting in Years 7 to 9. Written work in these years receives encouraging remarks from the teacher, but too often there is too little information about the standard reached and how to improve. Nonetheless, some teachers use assessment well in lessons to develop students' answers in order to meet criteria for gaining higher marks in GCSE examinations.
69. Leadership is good, rapidly tackling organisational issues through incisive review and determined follow-up procedures. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. There is a clear strategic vision and a sound plan for further improvement. Management is satisfactory because not all aims are fully established in day-to-day classwork. The support for learning provided by the well-managed libraries is invaluable.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

70. The use of language and literacy is satisfactory overall. Standards of literacy are average, with better achievement and teaching in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. Productive writing is less in evidence in the work of younger students, where standards of presentation and accuracy are satisfactory. There is a better range of opportunities for extended writing in Years 10 and 11, including in the work-related learning followed by some students of lower ability and for all students in drama. There is too little drafting of work in Years 7 to 9. In most subjects, teachers satisfactorily display key specialist words and vocabulary for each lesson. There is some good use of writing guides to prompt and support students, but their use is not consistently applied across all subjects. However, wider reading is supported well by the collaboration of the libraries on the two sites. Although literacy and language development have been identified as a priority for improvement, effective action has been delayed by staffing problems.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average in Spanish and German.
- Teaching and learning are good in Spanish and German.
- There is some unsatisfactory teaching and classroom management in French.
- The good curriculum provides a wide range of linguistic experience.
- Resources for the subject have improved considerably since the previous inspection.

Commentary

71. Overall, students are given good opportunities to study modern foreign languages. GCSE results in 2003 were above average in French and Spanish and well above average in German. Provisional GCSE results for 2004 were above average in Spanish and German and average in French. Boys do less well than girls in examinations. Overall, teachers' assessments of students in Year 9 in 2004 were below average, a decline from average standards in 2003.

72. At the end of Years 9 and 11, standards are average overall in modern foreign languages. They are average in French but above average for those students taking Spanish and German. There are no differences in attainment across the four key skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. Students achieve well in Spanish and German and achieve satisfactorily in French. There are unsatisfactory elements of teaching in French which account for the differences found in achievement and standards. Boys achieve less well than girls because their work is less detailed and less accurate. There are no differences in achievement between students who have special educational needs, those identified as gifted or talented and students from minority ethnic backgrounds. Standards have risen in all three languages since the previous inspection.
73. Teaching and learning are good in Spanish and German. Lessons are planned carefully to ensure students learn well by having good opportunities to practise both their spoken and written language. English is rarely spoken. Teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve, especially in Years 10 and 11, and set challenging work to ensure standards rise.
74. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in French. French classes generally contain students with a wide ability range of attainment and teachers do not always take sufficient account of this when planning lessons. Consequently, progress is limited for some students. More students study French, especially in Years 7 to 9, and consequently there is a wide range of attitudes to work in the subject. There is a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching in French. Where this occurs, it is because the teacher does not control the class well enough. Consequently, students do not pay sufficient attention, preferring to sit and chat. This restricts their progress. In other lessons, both teacher and students generally speak English, clearly restricting students' opportunities to learn French.
75. In general, students behave well in lessons and show good attitudes to work. Modern foreign languages make a good contribution to students' literacy development. Teachers and students make good use of computers to enhance and enrich the curriculum. There are satisfactory assessment procedures to track students' attainment and progress. However, the use of the data provided for setting targets and showing students how they can improve is limited.
76. There has been good progress since the previous inspection. Resources and accommodation are now good and the school is developing a very good ICT centre and languages laboratory. The curriculum is good. Three languages are on offer and students have opportunities to study two. A number of trips abroad enhance the curriculum. The management of the subject is satisfactory overall. Although the head of modern foreign languages has not been in post long enough to have made a significant impact on standards, she is showing good leadership in establishing clear priorities for development.

European and Community Languages

77. Provision for European and Community languages is good and supplements the main languages provision well. Students have opportunities to study Chinese and Japanese in addition to the main languages offered. Where students are able to take GCSE examinations earlier than usual, this is done. For example, native-speaking Dutch and French students have taken GCSE in Year 7.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Strong interim leadership is successfully resolving recent problems of staffing and organisational instability.
- A mutually supportive team of teachers is working hard to raise standards of teaching and learning.
- Teachers' planning takes good account of the differing abilities of students.
- The marking and assessment of students' work are inconsistent and do not provide specific targets for improvement.
- The lack of an effective whole-school policy for numeracy restricts students' use of mathematics in other subjects.
- Teaching assistants provide excellent support, which enables students with learning difficulties to make good progress.

Commentary

78. GCSE results in 2003 were above average. However, the proportion of students gaining A*-C grades in the 2004 GCSE examinations was below average, representing unsatisfactory achievement by these students. The decline in 2004 was the result of some instability in staffing and organisation during 2003-04, which adversely affected the teaching of students studying for their GCSE examination. These problems have been resolved and the standard of work by students currently in Years 10 and 11 is average, with the work of higher-attaining students being above average. The achievement of these students is good.
79. The overall standard attained by Year 9 students in the 2004 national tests was below the national average. However, the proportion of students achieving the higher levels was in line with that for all schools and for similar schools. This represents satisfactory progress by these students because on entry to the school their standards were below average. In 2003 the overall standard attained was average. Over the past four years there has been a gradual trend of improvement. The standard of work of students currently in Years 7 to 9 is average and their achievement is good.
80. The quality of teaching and learning across all year groups is good overall, with some which is very good or excellent. Teachers plan their work thoroughly and take good account of students' differing abilities. Teaching assistants give excellent support to those students with learning difficulties. Teachers provide good extended learning opportunities for those who are particularly talented in mathematics. For example, gifted students in Years 10 and 11 are prepared well for early entry for the GCSE examination. They are then enabled to progress to study statistics or advanced mathematics courses. Teachers make good use of ICT to enhance their teaching and to stimulate students' learning. The most successful teaching was characterised by lessons which progressed at a good pace and in which teachers had high expectations and used a variety of learning styles, including collaboration amongst students. Teaching was less effective when it was dominated by the teacher and provided few opportunities for students to demonstrate their understanding and learning. The attitudes and behaviour of students towards their learning are good. When given the opportunity they collaborate well with each other and respond well to questions. They demonstrate mutual respect and have good working relationships with their teachers. Their positive attitudes have a significant effect on their learning and achievement.
81. Accommodation for the teaching of mathematics has been improved significantly since the previous inspection. Classrooms are located in a suited arrangement, which creates opportunities for teachers to work well together. All rooms have attractive displays, which include the department's statement of shared values, and most are equipped with ICT resources to provide wider opportunities for teaching. Consequently, all students in Years 7 to 9 have timetabled provision for ICT to develop further their learning of mathematics.
82. There has been good improvement, overall, since the previous inspection. The leadership of the acting head of department is good. He is successfully resolving difficulties arising from previous staffing and organisational instabilities. He leads a mutually supportive team of

teachers who are working hard to re-establish the rising trend in standards seen before 2004. An experienced member of the department has been appointed to take over its leadership in 2005. The management of the department is satisfactory. A departmental handbook provides good guidance and schemes of work which enable teachers to plan their work effectively. A strategic plan includes an objective to improve procedures for assessment, which at present have unsatisfactory elements because they do not consistently provide students with specific enough targets for improvement.

Mathematics across the curriculum

83. The use of mathematics across the curriculum is satisfactory overall. However, there is no effective policy for numeracy across the curriculum. A partial policy is in place, but this is not managed coherently across all year groups and other subjects. As a consequence, students are not given explicit opportunities to apply effectively enough their knowledge of mathematics. However, there is evidence that in some subjects students make satisfactory use of mathematics to support their learning. For example, in art they use their knowledge of sequences and patterns to create pictures, in science they carry out calculations and draw graphs, whilst in geography they transfer data into charts, graphs and diagrams. In other subjects there is little evidence of the planned use of mathematics to enhance learning.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well by the end of Year 11, particularly in the vocational course.
- Subject leadership is good, but there are some unsatisfactory elements in the management of courses in Years 7 to 9.
- Students have very good attitudes to science and this helps most students to make good progress by Year 11.
- Higher-attaining students are not sufficiently well challenged in lessons.
- Assessment and marking procedures are not used consistently well enough in Years 7 to 9.
- The old laboratories in the main school restrict teaching, learning and students' achievement.

Commentary

84. Students are offered a good range of science courses in Years 10 and 11. GCSE results in 2003 were significantly above average for students taking the double science examination and above average in biology and chemistry. However, they fell to below average for both single and double science and chemistry in 2004, but were average in biology. Only a small percentage gained higher A* or A grades in all sciences, which shows limited progress is made by some more able students. Nevertheless, most students now take GNVQ science, where the school has significantly greater success. In 2004 there was a high pass rate at intermediate level, although no students gained a merit or distinction. Overall, this represented good achievement. Standards in work and lessons are currently above average and students' achievement is good.
85. National test results at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were average compared with all schools. However, compared with similar schools nationally, students' attainment was well above average. In the Year 9 tests in 2004 there was a decline to below average in the proportion of students attaining the expected Level 5 or above. However, most students made satisfactory progress overall because their attainment on entry to the school was below average. Nevertheless, the attainment of students at the higher Level 6 or above was below average.
86. Overall, standards by Year 9 in lessons and work are now average and the students' achievement satisfactory. Boys and girls are both now starting to make good progress and this is helped by some very good attitudes towards the subject. However, there is an

unsatisfactory element because the match of work with the students' learning needs is inconsistent, especially in the Years 7 and 8 groups. This is because lessons with higher-ability students were insufficiently challenging, whilst the work was too demanding for some middle- and lower-ability students, which limited their progress. Furthermore, the development of scientific enquiry skills is limited in Years 7 to 9 because students have too few practical lessons.

87. Teaching and learning are good overall. They are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Some excellent teaching and learning were seen in Year 11. Teachers are enthusiastic and have good subject knowledge. There is mutual respect between students and their teachers and most students have very good attitudes, which support well the good learning. Lessons start well by the sharing with the students of that which they are aiming to learn. ICT is used well to stimulate students' interest and to help students learn difficult scientific concepts. However, in some lessons on the main school site, old laboratories do not provide an environment which supports learning sufficiently well and they limit opportunities for collaborative work. Literacy development is supported well because key vocabulary is displayed on the board for students.
88. Assessment is satisfactory overall. However, some lessons end hurriedly without a clear conclusion, reducing the opportunity for teachers to assess the learning gains made by some students. Furthermore, assessment and attainment data about students' performance is not always used sufficiently well by some teachers to help in their lesson planning. The use of assessment data to track students' performance and set targets for improvement is less effective in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11. Not all teachers use the whole-school marking policy consistently enough to support students' learning.
89. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language are supported well by classroom assistants. Nevertheless, although higher-attaining students come to lessons with good levels of knowledge and understanding, some teachers do not build sufficiently well on these students' prior learning, particularly in Years 7 to 9. The department uses a good structure to plan lessons, but teachers do not focus on providing sufficiently different work for higher-attaining students.
90. The leadership of the head of department is good. The subject leader has inspired good teamwork and understands well the changes needed to improve standards, particularly in Years 7 to 9. The department is served well by an effective and efficient team of technicians. Management is satisfactory overall, as is improvement since the previous inspection. However, management is good in Years 10 and 11 where it has led to improved standards. Nevertheless, there are unsatisfactory elements in Years 7 to 9 as clear policies linked to improving the quality of teaching, learning and assessment are not established well enough. Monitoring and evaluation to ensure policy and practice are implemented consistently across the department are not fully in place.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and students' positive attitudes help students to achieve well.
- Students are unsure of how to progress to higher levels of attainment due to a lack of clear guidance in their assessed work.

- The management of ICT has been adversely affected by difficulties in the recruitment of an ICT co-ordinator.
- The use ICT across the curriculum is good and enables students to improve their ICT skills rapidly.

Commentary

91. Overall, there have been small entry numbers in recent years and therefore comparisons with national averages are statistically difficult. Nevertheless, in 2003 and 2004, Year 11 students' standards were above average overall for A*-C passes in GCSE examinations. However, in 2003 all such passes were at grade C with no higher level passes. In 2003 the teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 were above average. These were below average in 2004, but this is due to an improved and more rigorous assessment programme within the department rather than falling standards. Currently, standards are average by Year 9 and above average by Year 11. Achievement and progress are good in all year groups because students enter school with below-average standards and leave with standards above average. Boys and girls achieve equally well. Students with special educational needs are looked after well and make good progress.
92. Teaching and learning are good. Although non-specialist teachers are used, they have sufficient knowledge of the curriculum to teach the lessons well. Good teaching methods, a good pace to lessons and good attitudes and behaviour by students in lessons have all led to good learning. Students develop good computing skills because lessons are planned well. ICT resources are used very well to enhance learning. Well-designed booklets allow students in Years 10 and 11 to make good progress through independent study. Teaching assistants are used well to support students with special educational needs. Homework extends learning well. However, in Years 7 to 9, assessment of students' work does not inform them how to progress to the next stage in their learning. Nevertheless, students in Years 10 and 11 are encouraged to keep track of their own progress using a recently installed, well-designed software database.
93. The computer network is reliable and is maintained well by the team of highly valued technicians. ICT resources are very good. The very good numbers of computers, interactive digital whiteboards and the very good range of software enable students to build their ICT skills well. Accommodation is satisfactory. The rooms are airy, spacious and the wall displays are good, but seating is not good enough to allow students to adjust their posture and sit comfortably at the computers.
94. Leadership of the department is good. Clear vision and sense of purpose have led to a good cross-curricular approach to ICT for students, particularly in Years 10 and 11, enabling all students to build their ICT skills well. Management is satisfactory. Of necessity, many teachers are non-specialists because it has been difficult to recruit specialists. Nevertheless, their training needs have been identified satisfactorily and they receive adequate assistance to enable them to teach effectively. Newly qualified teachers are given good support. Leadership responds well to the needs of the students by providing suitable courses for them. Lesson plans are linked to the ICT National Curriculum guidelines, but numeracy, literacy and citizenship opportunities are not clearly defined. The manager is aware of the needs of the department, but since he is not teaching ICT, he does not have personal experience of the effects of his leadership. Consequently, he relies on regular meetings with ICT teachers in order to manage the department satisfactorily.
95. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The monitoring of teaching in Years 8 and 9 has improved, as have standards. However, the use of non-specialist teachers and difficulty in recruiting an ICT co-ordinator have resulted in less effective management since the previous inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

96. The use of ICT across the curriculum is good. ICT is used widely and enables students to extend well their computing skills. For example, students use e-mail to send their work to teachers. There are dedicated ICT suites in the science, design and technology, mathematics, English and modern foreign languages departments, thereby widening the opportunity for students to use ICT. Students are supervised well when they access computers in the independent learning centres and other areas during break times and before and after school. This greatly improves their ICT performance and enables very good coursework to be achieved. The combination of specialist courses and cross-curricular opportunities means students reach good standards very quickly. However, ICT is underdeveloped in art and design, history and in music.

HUMANITIES

97. In these areas, history, geography and religious education were inspected in depth, but psychology and sociology were sampled.

Psychology

98. One Year 10 GCSE psychology lesson was seen. Teaching, learning and students' achievement were satisfactory overall. Standards were average, but students' attitudes to the course were good. There were some very good learning opportunities in this lesson where students considered various memory tests and evaluated their effectiveness. The teacher had planned a very good range of psychological experiments and these above average students were well motivated. However, learning was limited because the teacher spent too much time talking and intervening, which restricted opportunities for the students to contribute. Consequently, opportunities were lost for the students to consider fully and explain the experimental methods being employed.

Sociology

99. One Year 10 GCSE sociology lesson was seen. Standards were above average. Teaching, learning and students' attitudes were all good. This was a good lesson for higher-attaining students, who achieved well because they felt challenged both by the subject and their teacher. There was a very good contribution to the students' personal development through a well-focused study and discussion on prejudice and discrimination. The high levels of challenge offered to the students gave good opportunities for reflection on the spiritual, moral and social implications of institutional racism.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching makes a strong contribution to students' achievement.
- Teaching encourages students to develop independent learning skills.
- Good leadership provides a clear direction for the subject.
- Assessment procedures are used well in Years 10 and 11, but not in earlier years.

Commentary

100. GCSE examination results in 2003 were well above average. In recent years they have been consistently average and were so again in 2004. Boys performed as well as girls. The evidence from the inspection is that standards by Year 11 are average and students achieve well. Students' skills of independent enquiry, interpretation and analysis of sources are developed soundly through the very well organised in-depth study of local history. They make good gains in their knowledge and understanding of key historical events.
101. Teachers' assessments of students at the end of Year 9 in 2003 and 2004 were above average. Standards in Year 9 are currently average. This represents good achievement, given that students enter the school with below average history skills. Year 9 students, especially the most able, write effectively at length, although their skills of critically analysing sources and interpreting events are underdeveloped. Students with special educational needs also achieve well as they are provided with good support and work which matches their needs.
102. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers use their good subject knowledge well to plan lessons thoroughly. A range of challenging activities and resources are used well to stimulate students' learning. However, the use of computers has yet to be developed fully as a resource. The emphasis in the teaching on developing literacy and independent enquiry promotes in the students good skills of research, extended writing and working by themselves. The good working relationships with students, and teachers' classroom control, encourage good learning, which is also enhanced by the students' good attitudes to work. Regular marking provides students with helpful advice about how to improve. Analysis of assessment results and target-setting are good in Years 10 and 11. However, although students in earlier years know their National Curriculum levels, they are less sure as to how to raise them after they have completed assessments.
103. Leadership is good. The head of department provides a clear vision and strong direction. Teachers work together well in joint planning and share good practice through lesson observations and monitoring. Management is satisfactory as insufficient use is made of ICT and assessments for learning in Years 7 to 9. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Audits of the department have produced a positive response in changing teaching styles and the curriculum. Consequently, standards have risen in Years 7 to 9 and achievement has become more consistently good in GCSE examinations.

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in 2004 were above average.
- A new GCSE syllabus and more up-to-date resources have been introduced which engage students' interest in geography.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to develop their enquiry skills through fieldwork in Years 7 to 9.
- Systems to ensure the accurate assessment of students' work at the end of Year 9 are now being implemented consistently well.

Commentary

104. GCSE results were well above average in 2003 and above average in 2004. These results represent good achievement for the small numbers of students concerned compared with their previous attainment. In the teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9, results were average in 2003 but declined in 2004 to become well below average. This drop is explained by changes and improvements in assessment methods as teachers seek to ensure that students' work is marked more precisely. New assessment systems are now being implemented consistently, so work is given accurate attainment levels in line with national standards.

105. Standards in geography are below expectations in Year 9, but students' progress is satisfactory. Many students have limited knowledge of the subject at the beginning of Year 7, but make satisfactory gains in their understanding and skills by Year 9. The small number of students who choose to study geography beyond Year 9 reach standards which are above expectations by Year 11 and their achievement is good. The achievement of students with special educational needs is satisfactory because teachers and classroom assistants give them constructive individual help.
106. Teaching is satisfactory overall and in some lessons it is good. Learning is also satisfactory because most lessons are well planned and structured so that students move smoothly from one task to the next. Teachers are beginning to use a wider range of attractive resources and teaching and learning methods, which engage students' interest. However, there are not enough opportunities for students to develop their enquiry skills through fieldwork and the use of ICT by both students and teachers is limited. Many students have good attitudes to learning and respond well to the teaching they receive, but some lower-attaining boys and girls have difficulty in concentrating on their work so their pace of learning slows down.
107. The leadership and management of geography by the head of humanities are good. Good priorities have been identified for development, new resources have been bought and detailed schemes of work are in place. Teaching and learning are monitored effectively, but good practice is not yet shared fully. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory because GCSE results have improved. Although the department is still undergoing a period of staff change, it has both the commitment and the capacity to improve further.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students in Year 10 do not receive their full statutory entitlement to religious education.
- Leadership of religious education by the head of faculty is good.
- There is unsatisfactory use of assessment to support students in raising standards of attainment.

Commentary

108. GCSE results in 2003 were well below average. However, results for those students who followed a short GCSE course in 2004 show standards below the national average. Overall, this shows good improvement from the previous year. Nevertheless, the limited time available for religious education in Year 10 falls short of the recommendation in the locally agreed syllabus and consequently has a negative effect on standards of attainment and students' achievement. Consequently, standards in the current Year 11 are below average, although students' achievement is satisfactory. Students make satisfactory progress in Years 7 to 9. However, by the end of Year 9 standards are below the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. This is because students' standards on entry to the school are below those expected; however, achievement is satisfactory.
109. Learning in religious education is satisfactory overall in all year groups. However, the poor attitudes and behaviour of a small group of students prevented satisfactory learning in the lessons seen. Teaching is satisfactory overall throughout the school. Teachers have sound knowledge of the subject and plan a satisfactory variety of activities. Nevertheless, where teaching is good this is because the students are more actively involved in the lesson and challenged well to reflect on moral and ethical dilemmas. However, there is insufficient use of assessment to help students set their own learning goals and reflect on their achievements.

110. Leadership of the department is good overall. The head of faculty is a good role model for staff and students and he has a clear vision, and practical planning, for the development of the subject. Management is satisfactory, although there is a weakness in analysing students' performance. Since the previous inspection, provision for staffing has improved with the appointment of specialist teachers. The requirements of the locally agreed syllabus in Years 7 to 9 are now met. However, the lack of entitlement for religious education in Year 10 means that, overall, there is unsatisfactory improvement from the previous inspection.

TECHNOLOGY

111. Design and technology was inspected in depth, but engineering was also sampled.

Engineering

112. One Year 10 GCSE engineering lesson was seen. Teaching, learning, achievement and students' attitudes were satisfactory. Attainment was average. There was a slow start to this lesson due to some poor behaviour by some students. However, once this had been resolved, the teacher's good subject knowledge enabled the students to gain a satisfactory understanding of the variety and use of temporary fastening devices. The students' use of literacy was well supported through the correct use of technical language and terms.

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a good range of courses in Years 10 and 11.
- Students' attainment in textiles is consistently well above average.
- Higher-attaining students are not sufficiently well challenged in some areas of the subject.
- Good teaching and working relationships contribute well to the students' good achievement.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is not sufficiently rigorous.
- Agreed assessment practice is inconsistently applied in some areas of the subject.

Commentary

113. In 2003, GCSE results were average overall. Boys' results were below average and girls' above. However, results at the higher grades were below average. Overall, students achieved less well in design and technology than in other GCSE subjects taken at the same time. In 2004, results were also average. Textiles results were well above average. Resistant materials and electronics showed the biggest improvement in 2004. Achievement, from below average attainment on entry in Year 7, is good overall by the end of Year 11. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 show standards to be average, but these fell from well above average in 2003. However, since attainment on entry is below average, this represents good achievement.

114. Current standards in Year 9 are average overall and in line with recent teachers' assessments. However, too few students attain the higher levels and higher attainers are not sufficiently challenged. Weaker work shows limited research or development of ideas, drawings out of proportion and poor annotation. Current standards in Year 11 are average overall. However, where there is below average work, this is mainly due to poor quality presentation, limited range of individual ideas, incomplete evaluations or where ICT is not always used to best advantage. Nevertheless, good development of initial ideas, good product analysis and good use of ICT for presentation was seen in graphics projects and in textiles. Literacy skills are supported well in most lessons with good use of technical language to support learning.

115. Students' learning is good because teaching is good overall. In an excellent textiles lesson, students learn more because of the teacher's excellent subject expertise and high expectations. In the good or better lessons, teachers use resources effectively, ensure a good pace and plan with clear learning objectives. Satisfactory lessons have many positive features. However, they have other characteristics such as not allowing students to take the initiative or make independent judgements or decisions, students may be off task, time is not used effectively and there are instances of poor behaviour by some students. Nevertheless, most teachers use good questioning skills to reinforce learning and the majority of students respond well, especially to the practical work, which is mostly of a good standard. Students with special educational needs make good progress, especially in lessons when support assistants are present.
116. Leadership of the department is good. The head of department has ensured satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection and a number of new initiatives have been introduced. The department's in-service training programme is a good feature to help staff develop confidence with the skills necessary to deliver the new technologies. The department has made a good contribution to the introduction of vocational courses. The head of department is building and developing well a team approach to the teaching of the subject following a period of instability and staffing recruitment difficulties.
117. The management of the subject is satisfactory overall. The curriculum has been satisfactorily revised, control technology is now taught well and work is prepared better for different levels of attainment, apart from enhancement work for higher attainers. Accommodation on two sites has improved but is only satisfactory at best. ICT resources are good, but much of the equipment in the workshops is unsatisfactory because it is old and outdated. Technician staff give invaluable support to the department. Display of work is good. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning by the head of department is not rigorous enough across all areas. This is due to a lack of time because there are 17 teachers, some of whom are non-specialists. Although satisfactory assessment procedures are in place, assessment practice is not consistent across all material areas, resulting in over-generous marking by some teachers, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Students are often unsure of their National Curriculum levels or target grades. Nevertheless, a new system of tracking students' progress is starting to be implemented satisfactorily.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

118. In these areas, art and design, and music were inspected in depth. Drama, expressive arts and media studies were sampled.

Drama

119. Three lessons of drama were seen, two in Year 9 and one in Year 10. Excellent teaching, learning and achievement were seen in a Year 9 lesson involving students with special educational needs and also in the Year 10 lesson. The attitudes of the special educational needs students were excellent and they were skilfully supported by their teacher in the production of a video on bullying. This made a significant contribution to their moral and social development. Standards of performance in the Year 10 lesson, on the use of sound and voice in drama, were very high. Working relationships were very good and challenge through the teacher's questioning deepened very well the students' understanding and learning.

Expressive arts

120. Two lessons of expressive arts were sampled in Years 10 and 11. Teaching, learning and achievement were satisfactory. Students' attitudes were good. All students who take an arts subject also take an additional integrated GCSE course comprising dance, drama, music and art. Standards were average overall in both lessons seen. However, there was a considerable difference between individual students' attainment depending on their ability and commitment. Students in Year 10 discussed satisfactorily motifs in preparation for a project of their own. They made good links with work done in art and design, dance, and recurring motifs they had seen on a recent visit to Derek Jarman's Japanese garden. In Year 11, students worked on individual projects and received good one-to-one help from their teacher. They talked about their work with interest, but some held the view that they needed more time to spend on their main arts subject. Teaching is enthusiastic, though occasionally over-stretched in the different specialist subjects.

Media Studies

121. One Year 10 lesson in media studies was seen. Teaching, learning, achievement and students' attitudes were good. Attainment was above average. Students worked well and co-operatively on a variety of tasks relating to the creation of a soap drama. Good working relationships ensured students listened, and learned, from each other well. The challenge of reporting back to the whole class supported well the development of students' oral language skills.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- New leadership offers clear vision and a strong sense of purpose.
- GCSE results are improving and art and design is a popular subject.
- Weaknesses in the timetable, accommodation and monitoring restrict students' achievement.
- There is insufficient use of ICT.
- The poor behaviour of a minority of students affects the learning of others.

Commentary

122. GCSE results were below average in 2003, but improved significantly to average in 2004. However, results have declined overall since the previous inspection. Students enter the school in Year 7 with average standards, but there is a wide variation in previous experience. By the end of Year 9 in 2003, teachers assessed students' attainment as above average, but their marking was over-generous. In 2004, Year 9 results were lower than average, but more accurate. Consequently, students make satisfactory progress overall between Years 7 to 11. Standards of attainment are currently average and students' achievement satisfactory by Years 9 and 11.

123. From Year 7, students develop sound skills using a wide range of materials and different techniques. However, a weaker area is observational drawing and, especially when set for homework, students frequently do not finish or refine their work. Although students use the Internet to help them in their research, their use of ICT to find or manipulate images in lessons is restricted by the lack of facilities in the art studios. Students in Years 7 to 9 make insufficient use of their sketchbooks to develop, plan and evaluate their ideas. Older students feel valued and appreciate the extra effort the teachers make on their behalf. As a result, they enjoy their work, spend considerable time on it and gain in confidence and self-esteem. However, in Years 10 and 11, students lack a secure enough foundation from previous years for them to develop sufficiently their skills and achieve higher standards.

124. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers have good subject knowledge and make good use of their skills in demonstrating tasks and materials. They give constructive support and make a point of speaking to every student individually during a lesson. Teachers are aware of students' circumstances and their sensitive guidance is based on knowing students' individual needs. The students' record sheet used for GCSE classes is a good initiative and enables students to know how well they are doing. However, not all students are involved fully in assessing their own work and using their sketchbooks to keep records of marking and targets.
125. Learning is satisfactory in all year groups. From Year 7, students make a close study of artists and art movements. This broadens their knowledge, helps them make connections to try in their own work and becomes an important factor in their learning. However, some younger students are difficult to motivate and ignore accepted class routines, such as listening to instructions and responding politely to others. Their behaviour interrupts the smooth running of the lessons and the quality of their learning. Students with special educational needs receive extra support from the class teacher and make satisfactory progress. By Years 10 and 11, students begin to work more independently and talk with enthusiasm about their ideas. Higher-attaining students respond well to the difficult learning challenges presented by the teachers and their personalised sketchbooks and portfolios show an impressive volume of work.
126. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The new leadership is central to the development of art and design in the school. Clear vision, a strong sense of purpose and a dedication to raising standards characterise the team of teachers. However, there is currently no opportunity to monitor teaching, so sharing good practice is informal. Part-time staffing results in shared classes, problems in timetabling and unsatisfactory mixtures of single and double lessons. Furthermore, there are problems in moving work and preparing materials for students who are taught in different rooms during the week, particularly as the department has no technical support. Teachers having to move between sites can mean a late start to lessons and this causes restlessness amongst waiting students. Whilst these difficulties are overcome with considerable effort, they create inefficiencies in day-to-day management. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory overall. Although accommodation has improved, teachers are unable to cover satisfactorily the requirements of the syllabus for those classes which are taught in a small, separate hut on the main site. This room is some distance away from the studios, without water or other practical facilities.

Music

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards by the end of Year 9 are too low.
- There is insufficient work, either available or recorded, for Year 11 students.
- Not enough time for music lessons is allocated in Years 8 and 9.
- Poor accommodation and resources restrict both what can be taught and students' perception of music.
- There are significant weaknesses in the overall management of the department.

Commentary

127. GCSE results in 2003 were below average. A small number of students took GCSE music in 2004, but there were too few for statistical data to be reliable. A Grade C or above was attained by three-quarters of the group. There are currently no students studying music in

Year 10. The students in Year 11 have not recorded any compositions yet and there is minimal written work. This means that no judgement can be made about the standards attained or the quality of teaching and learning as, due to timetabling, no Year 11 lessons could be seen during the inspection.

128. Teachers' assessments of students at the end of Year 9 in 2003 and 2004 were very low. Current standards are well below average in Year 9. Students' musical ability is well below average on entry to the school and their achievement is unsatisfactory. This is so for all groups, including those who are gifted or talented, from minority ethnic groups or have special educational needs. All students in Years 8 and 9 have music lessons on a rotational basis with other expressive arts subjects. This means there are long gaps between lessons and there is insufficient time to teach all requirements of the National Curriculum. Students forget many of the musical skills and knowledge previously learnt and therefore struggle applying them when they next have music lessons.
129. The quality of teaching and learning is unsatisfactory for students in Years 7 to 9. Lesson planning is weak and work is not planned to match the abilities of all students, including those who are gifted or talented, or have special educational needs. A number of students in many classes do not arrive at their lessons ready to learn. Too often, teachers have to spend time managing behaviour and, as a result, all students, including the more competent, make unsatisfactory progress in lessons. This is because they fail to complete practical or written tasks properly. A number of worksheets reinforce learning, but many are incomplete and do not challenge sufficiently the more competent students. Teachers do use musical language in lessons, but questioning is not rigorous enough to ensure students do the same and endings of lessons are not used effectively to consolidate learning. The results of assessment are not shared with students so they can understand how to improve their work, or used by teachers to monitor and analyse how well the students are doing.
130. Accommodation is poor. Some lessons are taught in non-specialist classrooms. Despite some display, classrooms on the main site are drab and do not stimulate students' interest in, and enjoyment of, music. Resources are also poor. The absence of ICT equipment means that students do not fulfil the statutory requirements for using computers in order to store, refine and record their compositions. Accommodation and resources are both barriers to learning and restrict what can be taught in lessons.
131. Leadership by the current subject co-ordinator is satisfactory overall. This is because new priorities for development have been identified and, for example, new ensembles started. The school has identified an urgent need to improve provision for music. However, management is currently unsatisfactory. Since the previous inspection, there have been various changes in staffing, but improvement has been poor. This is because standards are now lower, the quality of teaching and learning is worse and issues identified in the previous report have not been resolved. There is no rigorous analysis of data and the assessment of students' work is unsatisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' attainment in the full GCSE course is well above average.
- The number and variety of courses offered in Years 10 and 11 are very good.
- The poor attitudes and behaviour of a small minority of boys leads to their unsatisfactory achievement.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory and necessitates frequent movement between sites.
- The one hour and forty minute lesson, once a week, leads to lack of pace and progression.
- The range and number of extra-curricular activities are good.

Commentary

132. Full-course GCSE results have been improving year-by-year and were well above average in 2003 and 2004. Present GCSE students have high standards and their achievement is very good. The coursework of higher-attaining students is very well structured and makes good use of ICT. A few talented boys and girls in all years attain high standards and they benefit considerably from the opportunities provided by their teachers as part of the good extra-curricular programme. This year the BTEC sports course has been introduced and accommodates well the interests of a challenging group of boys, most of whom have special educational needs. The attainment of the majority of students in core physical education in Years 10 and 11 is average and their achievement is satisfactory. Those students who study the short GCSE course in their weekly core lesson reach average standards. The first year group to take this examination did so in 2004 and results were average. The once-weekly lesson makes it difficult for short course students to raise their fitness levels and performance skills.
133. The standards of students when they join the school are below average. By the end of Year 9, students attain average standards in most activities and their achievement is satisfactory. However, the achievement of a few boys in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory. This is because they lack concentration and their behaviour is poor. This limits their learning and their standards are below average. Teachers' assessments in 2004 showed standards to be well below average. The department agrees that these were not accurate and had not been fully monitored.
134. Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Nevertheless, the working relationships of established teachers with students are very good. This helps these teachers to manage well the behaviour of some very difficult students, especially boys. Newly qualified teachers in the department do not always manage behaviour as effectively and this hinders students' learning. Furthermore, the majority of lessons lack pace because they are one hour and forty minutes in length. Nonetheless, students of all abilities make satisfactory progress and their learning is satisfactory. Students gradually improve their level of performance because teaching focuses well on helping them to build practical skills. Lessons focus satisfactorily on improving students' knowledge of health and fitness, for example by analysing results from heart monitors. Digital cameras are used frequently to capture movements, but insufficient opportunities are given for students to analyse their performances.
135. The leadership of the subject is satisfactory overall. The head of department is a good role model and has created an effective team. However, for several years the majority of teaching staff have changed annually and newly qualified teachers have mainly staffed the department. Support for such staff has inevitably taken the attention of the head of department. Nevertheless, teaching is well monitored and the new teachers appreciate the good support they have been given. Overall, satisfactory improvements have been made since the previous inspection.
136. The management of physical education is satisfactory. The curriculum programme for students in Years 10 and 11 includes a very good range of accredited courses, which meet the needs and interests of all students. However, although teachers assess students' work at the end of each practical unit, the monitoring of assessment has been insufficiently rigorous and many students are unsure about how to improve. The accommodation is old and dilapidated and has no fields at one site. The other site has no specialist indoor facilities. Much time is wasted because staff and students have to travel between the two sites. The local leisure centre is sometimes used but is not regularly available.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

137. A number of vocational and other courses were sampled as part of the inspection. Courses seen were: applied business studies; ASDAN⁹; construction and building; health and social care; hospitality and catering; leisure and tourism.

Vocational courses

Provision in vocational courses is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A wide range of courses is available to students of all abilities.
- Very good teaching within vocational subjects helps students with their learning and captures their interest.
- The leadership of senior managers provides clear direction for the development of vocational education within the school.
- Management responsibilities for the vocational course provision are not clear.

Commentary

138. Vocational provision for students in Years 10 and 11 has been steadily improving in the last two years and is now very good. At the start of Year 10, students follow a wide variety of vocational routes leading to external accreditation at a number of different levels. In the majority of courses the standard of students' work is above average and compares very well with that of students in other schools who are following similar courses. Students are achieving very well and are, therefore, making very good progress towards their final accreditation.
139. Teaching and learning are very good overall in vocational subjects. Teachers have a very good understanding of the requirements of the courses and adopt a wide variety of styles to engage and motivate the students in their learning. Consequently, students are very interested in their studies and are keen to succeed.
140. The leadership provided by the senior managers of the school is very good. There is a clear vision for the future development of vocational courses and for the development of individual student vocational pathways. Very good links have been established with the local colleges, enabling students to be taught at both school and at college. Good progression routes into post-16 education have been established. Many of the students currently following vocational courses will continue their studies at a higher level post-16. Imaginative strategies have been developed to enable students to continue their post-16 courses whilst remaining at the school.
141. The day-to-day management of the vocational provision is satisfactory, but lacks coherence. Currently, the director for vocational education only has direct responsibility for college links and for the applied business course, whilst different faculties manage the remaining courses. Accountability for the monitoring and evaluation of the vocational provision is, therefore, fragmented and responsibilities are unclear.

Applied business studies

142. One Year 11 business education lesson was seen, where students explored the role and function of a trade union. Teaching, learning and achievement were very good, as were the students' attitudes to the subject. Standards were above average. This was because the teaching enabled the students to grasp very quickly an understanding of an individual worker's rights and responsibilities.

⁹ ASDAN stands for Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network, which grew out of the Youth Award Scheme development during the 1980s and was formally established as a charity in 1991. ASDAN programmes and qualifications blend activity-based curriculum enrichment with a framework for the development, assessment and accreditation of key skills and life skills, with a strong emphasis on negotiation, co-operation and rewarding achievement.

ASDAN

143. As part of their assessment, students prepared a two-course Christmas luncheon, to which inspectors were invited. This was a splendid occasion for all concerned. The food was well prepared and served and the cuisine imaginative. The students' attitudes to the course were very good and as the occasion progressed they became rightly, and increasingly, proud of their efforts. There was a noticeable increase in their self-esteem and confidence. Their achievement was very good. Discussions with the students after the lunch showed they are well motivated to stay on at college for more advanced catering courses.

Construction and building

144. One Year 11 GNVQ construction course lesson was seen. Teaching, learning, achievement and students' attitudes were all very good. Standards were above average. This was a very good lesson because the teaching style was tailored well to the needs of the students and enabled them to make good progress. Good subject expertise engendered enthusiasm in the students and enabled them to understand very well the correct sequence for preparing the layout of a building site.

Health and social care

145. One Year 10 applied GCSE health and social care lesson was seen. This was a very good lesson because the teacher was very aware of the differing abilities of students within the group and ensured that difficult ideas were explained in a logical and sequential way. This resulted in very positive learning experiences for the students. Consequently, although standards were average, teaching, learning, achievement and students' attitudes were all very good.

Hospitality and catering

146. One Year 10 BTEC hospitality and catering course lesson was seen. Standards and students' literacy skills were below average. Nevertheless, they were enabled to complete satisfactorily a letter, using word processing, asking for job information. Teaching, learning, achievement and students' attitudes were satisfactory. Students, including those with special educational needs, concentrated well on the task and working relationships with the teacher were good. This was a relevant task for the students, but the pace of the lesson was a little too relaxed, although the teacher's approach did help to build well the students' confidence.

Leisure and tourism

147. One Year 11 leisure and tourism lesson was seen. This was a low ability group and standards were below average. However, teaching, learning and students' attitudes were all very good. This was because the teacher used a wide variety of activities to develop the students' skills of more independent learning. Students showed good ICT skills, but low literacy skills. However, good working relationships ensured the students worked well on their tasks. Consequently, they achieved very well in their work involving reviewing leisure and tourism information relating to the local area. There was a keen determination to succeed.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

148. Personal, social and health education and citizenship are mainly taught through an integrated programme in a separate 50-minute lesson for all year groups, supplemented by activities in the daily 30-minute tutor period.

Citizenship and Personal, social and health education

Provision in the school's personal, social, health and citizenship education course is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching in Years 10 and 11 contributes well to students' good achievement.
- Good leadership ensures the curriculum is planned well.
- Tutor time is not always used effectively to support students' personal development.
- Effective assessment procedures have not yet been developed.
- Not enough opportunities are provided for students to participate in community-based activities.

Commentary

149. A small group of students attained well above average results in the short course GCSE examination in citizenship in 2004, the first year of the examination. By Year 11, current standards in citizenship and personal, social and health education are average and students achieve well. Writing, debating and enquiry skills are developed well. Students have a good understanding of concepts such as the power of the media and moral and social issues such as capital punishment.
150. Standards in Year 9 are below average. However, this represents satisfactory achievement, given that students enter the school with below average standards. Students develop a sound knowledge and understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Skills of communication and discussion are developed satisfactorily. However, as the teaching styles place less emphasis on writing, skills of extended, analytical writing by more able students are less well developed than discussion skills.
151. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. They are good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers use the well-planned schemes of work to stimulate effective enquiry work and good discussion. Learning is enhanced by the well-organised contributions by outside agencies such as the police and fire service. Challenging questions encourage students to evaluate their responses, attitudes and feelings towards being a responsible citizen. During the tutor periods the quality of teaching of some aspects of personal, social and health education is inconsistent, so learning in some sessions is unsatisfactory. This is because work is not always planned sufficiently well to meet the needs of the range of ages in the tutor groups. Learning in the Year 7 tutor periods, on the other hand, is good, as teachers plan very effectively to engage students in stimulating enquiry work. Regular marking provides students with helpful advice about how to improve. Although students evaluate their work, there are no rigorous assessment procedures to record their understanding of citizenship, personal and social matters, or skills of enquiry and participation.
152. Students also have opportunities to participate as responsible citizens through school activities such as the house and school councils and raising money for charity. However, there are not enough planned opportunities in the wider community for students to participate fully in active citizenship. Citizenship and personal and social development are also supported satisfactorily by related topics covered in other subjects, such as humanities, although contributions are limited.
153. Leadership is good and management is satisfactory. The newly appointed head of department provides clear direction for the subject. The well-integrated programme of citizenship and personal, social and health education, taught through a separate lesson, ensures a more effective provision for the students' personal development than at the time of the previous inspection. Teachers are being trained effectively and supported satisfactorily in the classroom. Teaching in this lesson is monitored, but not formally evaluated and good practice is not shared effectively enough. However, no checks are made on the quality of the teaching of personal and social development in the tutor period in Years 8 to 11 and this situation is unsatisfactory.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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