

INSPECTION REPORT

QUEEN ELIZABETH'S HIGH SCHOOL

Gainsborough

LEA area: Lincolnshire

Unique reference number: 120655

Headteacher: Mr J R Child

Reporting inspector: Mr K Davitte
15029

Dates of inspection: 22–25 January 2001

Inspection number: 189695

Short inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Grammar (selective)

School category: Community

Age range of students: 11 to 18 years

Gender of students: Mixed

School address: Morton Terrace
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Lincolnshire

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs P E Done

Date of previous inspection: 23/9/1996

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Queen Elizabeth's High School is a selective 11-18 co-educational grammar school in Gainsborough in the local educational authority of Lincolnshire. There are 1137 students on roll with 496 boys and 641 girls. There are 249 students in the sixth form with about ten per cent joining from other schools. The school is bigger than average for secondary schools nationally and has grown by 110 students since the last inspection in 1996. Students are recruited from a wide geographical area including Gainsborough and surrounding Lincolnshire villages and parts of Nottinghamshire, South Yorkshire and North Lincolnshire, an area which stretches across more than 50 miles. In September 2000, 180 students entering Year 7 were drawn from 69 schools. Twenty-five students speak English as an additional language (2.2 per cent) which is slightly higher than for most schools nationally but none are at an early stage of language acquisition. Fifty students have special educational needs (4.4 per cent) which is well below average for all schools and of these only one has a statement. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals (1.7 per cent) is well below the national average. Although attainment on entry is above average compared with all schools nationally the ability range is much wider than usual for grammar schools.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Queen Elizabeth's High School is a very good and very well led school. Highly motivated students benefit from predominantly very good teaching to make very good progress by the age of 16 and in the sixth form. Standards are high compared with national expectations. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The percentage of students attaining 5+ GCSE grades A*-C is very high compared with all schools and above average compared with selective schools. The percentage achieving 5+ A*-G grades is very high compared with all schools and selective schools.
- A-level results are very high in relation to all schools and are above average at grades A-B compared with selective schools.
- The quality of teaching, including a significant proportion of exceptional teaching.
- Relationships are excellent and at the heart of much of what the school achieves.
- The provision and quality of music throughout the school is of a very high standard.

What could be improved

- Results in National Curriculum tests at the age of 14
 - The proportion of A* grades at GCSE
- (The school is already focusing on these two areas as part of its monitoring and development plans)*

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The improvement in the school since the last inspection in September 1996 has been very good. Standards in Latin, food technology, and information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum, have improved considerably. There is now a much greater variety of teaching approaches and assessment is now strong. School development and budget planning are totally integrated and targets clearly set and monitored. Facilities for ICT have improved enormously with a network of over 100 computers installed. Library facilities

have benefited from a £40,000 building conversion but further investment is required in books, which is planned. Staff development and appraisal is now much more closely linked to the training needs identified for each teacher. There is a clearer understanding of what activities can contribute to students' spiritual education as seen in very good quality assemblies and in examples in lessons. Weaknesses in reports have been largely rectified but not all are clear enough in specifying what students need to do to improve further. The school has done much more than merely addressing the weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection. For example systems to monitor students' progress particularly in Years 10 and 11 have helped to raise standards. Significant improvements in accommodation include a refurbished modern languages block, the creation of a brand new technology area, an Arts studio, two new computer rooms and library developments mentioned above. Standards of teaching overall are higher and linked to improvements in results at GCSE and A-level in particular.

STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by 16- and 18-year-olds based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/AS-level examinations.

Performance in:	Compared with			
	All schools			Similar schools
	1998	1999	2000	2000
GCSE examinations	A*	A*	A*	C
A-levels/AS-levels	A*	A*	A*	n/a

Key

Very high	A*
Well above average	A
Above average	B
Average	C
Below average	D
Well below average	E

The percentage of students achieving 5+ GCSE grades A*-C in 2000 was very high compared with all schools (in the top five per cent of all schools nationally) and above average compared with similar schools i.e. grammar schools. Results were very high in 2000 at grades A*-G in comparison with all schools and grammar schools. When measured by the average points score per pupil (*calculated using A*=8; A=7; B=6; C=5; D=4; E=3; F=2; G=1*) GCSE results were very high compared with all schools and average compared with grammar schools. The school exceeded its ambitious GCSE targets in 2000. When results are broken down by grades the school does well at GCSE compared with selective schools in the percentage of A grades, but is correctly targeting an increase in the percentage of GCSE A* grades which will improve the average points score per pupil.

A-level results are very high and consistently in the top five per cent of all schools nationally measured by the average points score per student (*calculated using A=10; B=8; C=6; D=4; E=2*). Compared with selective schools A-level results are above average at the higher grades A-B which is a considerable achievement.

These results at GCSE and A-level represent very good progress by students, a substantial proportion of whom were of average ability when they joined the school in Year 7. The school faces a continuing challenge in maintaining such high results. The foundations laid in Years 7-9 make possible the very good achievements at GCSE and A-level. Results in national tests for 14-year-olds at the end of Year 9 are also very high compared with all schools, and again are consistently in the top five per cent of all schools nationally, but were well below average compared with grammar schools in 2000 and below average in 1999. The latter comparison does not adequately reflect the progress made from Year 7 to Year 9 in relation

to attainment on entry. The school is however again correctly targeting national tests at 14 as an area for improvement.

It is difficult to pick out the strongest and weaker subjects at GCSE and A-level as there is much consistency in results. At GCSE in 2000 six subjects achieved a 100 per cent success rate at grades A*-C (English literature, chemistry, food technology, information and communication technology, music and religious education) and 15 subjects achieved over a 95 per cent success rate. Music and information and communication technology (ICT) were particularly strong at A* grades in 2000 and music has been above average at A* compared with selective schools in each of the last three years. The best subject in terms of adding value to pupils' previous attainment was graphics. There are no weak subjects at GCSE but subjects which were notably below the very high school average at A*-C in 2000 were art (80%), German (80%), science (single award, 76%) and electronic products (83%). With the exception of German these were also below the school's average in 1999.

At A-level results are very high in most subjects. The school's own detailed and very good analysis of results confirms that the most successful departments vary from year to year but that differences are often marginal. There are occasional blips, for example mathematics was below the school average at A-E grades in 2000, but not in 1999. Human biology is the only subject to be notably below the school average in each of the last two years.

Standards seen at the inspection were very high by the end of Year 11 and by the end of the sixth form. Key features in this are the successful emphasis on mastering basic skills in literacy and numeracy by the end of Year 9, the quality of teaching and the monitoring of progress.

STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent: nearly all are keen, proud of their school and involve themselves readily in activities. They use teachers' constructive criticisms positively in their strong desire to improve. Sixth-formers are impressive and take their responsibilities seriously.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good: there is an orderly but productive atmosphere in nearly all lessons and in activities during the lunchtimes. Students are nearly always polite to each other and their teachers. Students confirm that bullying is rare.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent: relationships are extremely constructive and supportive. Students develop high level skills in both group work and in working independently. There is a healthy respect for the views of others.
Attendance	Very good: attendance is very high and unauthorised absence is well below average.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Aged 11-14 years	Aged 14-16 years	Aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good	Very good

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

Of 85 lessons observed 11 were excellent (13%), 34 were very good (40%), 25 were good (29%), 12 were satisfactory (14%) and 3 were unsatisfactory (4%). The percentage of excellent and very good teaching is well above average. Very good teaching is spread across departments. This is an improvement from the last inspection when teaching was very good in 25 per cent of lessons and unsatisfactory in ten per cent of lessons.

The majority of teaching in English, mathematics and science is very good. The skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught and the teaching of the former benefits from the implementation of a particularly good policy on literacy across the curriculum. Particular strengths in much of the teaching are teachers' subject knowledge, high expectations to meet the needs of all students, the very high quality of relationships, the management of students and the use of time. There is now a good variety of teaching methods. Students mostly work with interest and concentration, absorb and use information well and the quality of learning is very good. A small proportion of lessons do not inspire, do not involve students enough, and are insufficiently focused on the quality of students' learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good: a wide range of subjects at all stages. Traditional subjects such as Latin are preserved and new technologies and social sciences are embraced. Extra-curricular activities are very good with music a strength but extra-curricular activities in sport are stronger for boys than for girls. Time for physical education in Year 9 is lower than average.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Very good: students receive equal opportunities and a support system geared to their specific needs.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Very good: whilst none of the 25 students concerned are at an early stage in the acquisition of English their needs are carefully checked and met, with guidance from the local education authority.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good: moral and social development are excellent and spiritual and cultural development are very good. All aspects are sensitively and sensibly integrated into lessons and assemblies to generate interest and reflection. A flourishing house system makes a major contribution to personal development.

How well the school cares for its students	Very good: tutors, heads of year and heads of lower, middle and upper schools occupy key roles. Students feel very well supported. There is increasingly sophisticated use of data to track students' progress.
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HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good: staff are highly valued but are made aware of areas which can be improved further. A very smooth running school which exudes a sense of purpose and commitment to the needs of all. The headteacher has shown some exceptional talents in bringing about change.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good: well informed, active and highly supportive. Invaluable weekly meetings between the headteacher and chair of governors.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good: knows its strengths and weaknesses and tackles them systematically. There is a determination to build on strengths in line with the well known maxim promoted by the headteacher that 'one does not have to be bad to get better'.
The strategic use of resources	Very good: an average budget is used very well with a good emphasis on spending on learning resources and staff development linked to school plans. The budget is maximised through seeking best value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school's expectations of students to work hard and the progress they make • The quality of teaching • Standards of behaviour • The leadership and management of the school • The school is helping students to become mature and responsible • The ethos of the school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite general satisfaction with homework some parents feel that the load is at times excessive

Inspectors support the very positive views of parents of what pleases them most about the school. To have all parents who responded to the pre-inspection survey either strongly agreeing (75%) or tending to agree (25%) that the school expects their child to work hard and achieve his or her best is fairly unique. In relation to some concerns about homework, despite some good practice, teachers do not stress sufficiently how much time should be spent on homework particularly in Years 7-9. This is more difficult beyond Year 9, as a result of heavy coursework commitments, but a timetable of coursework deadlines has been produced to help students in their planning which is good practice.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The percentages of students attaining 5+ GCSE grades A*-C are very high compared with all schools and above average compared with selective schools. The percentage achieving 5+ A*-G grades is very high compared with all schools and selective schools.

1. The very high results at grades A*-C compared with all schools have been a consistent feature of the school in each of the last four years. In 2000 the school made an important breakthrough in achieving above average results compared with grammar schools in the proportion achieving 5+ A*-C grades and very high results in the proportion achieving 5+ A*-G grades.
2. In 2000 six out of 25 subjects achieved a 100 per cent success rate in GCSE at grades A*-C (English literature, chemistry, food technology, ICT, music and in the short course in religious education) and 15 subjects achieved over a 95 per cent success rate.
3. The very good results in ICT are influenced by the greatly improved provision in facilities since the last inspection. This is being built on further with all subjects across the curriculum having to commit themselves to including the use of ICT in their teaching through declared 'contracts'.
4. The quality of care and support which students receive makes a significant difference to the percentage of students achieving 5+ A*-C grades. Amongst the many measures adopted right from the time of students' entry into the school, selected students in Year 11 are allocated a mentor for extra support. Without this, borderline GCSE C/D candidates would err on the side of the lower of these two grades. The school operates a simple but very effective system for assessing the value of additional support offered. An analysis is carried out of the results based on the number of GCSE grades D and lower predicted and the actual number of grades D or lower achieved. This shows that on average students raise their performance to above D grade in three of the subjects for which they are mentored.

A-level results are very high in relation to all schools and are above average at grades A-B compared with selective schools.

5. In 2000 the average points score for students entered for two or more A-levels was 26.5 and very high in comparison with the national average of 18.2. This is an improvement from the time of the last inspection.
6. Seventeen out of 23 subjects achieved a 100 per cent pass rate at grades A-E in 2000. Nearly all subjects achieved higher results at grades A-E compared with all schools and selective schools nationally. The exceptions in 2000 were mathematics and human biology but mathematics achieved a 100 per cent success rate at A-E in each of the two preceding years. With small numbers, German improved in 2000 following a few lean years.
7. At the higher grades A-B, the school was well above average compared with all schools and above average compared with selective schools. In 2000, 56.5 per cent of all grades achieved in the school were in the A-B category compared with 50 per cent

for selective schools across all subjects. Particularly high percentages at grades A-B were achieved in 2000 in English literature (85%); English language and literature (67%); business studies (81%); law (70%); physics (79%) and psychology (86%). Amongst individual student results in 2000 one student achieved five A-level passes at grade A and seven others achieved four A grades.

8. The very good range of courses at A-level and the results achieved encourage students to follow a variety of courses at university and to pursue career paths which they may not have considered otherwise. The high quality careers library and advice offered are also important in that respect. The school has also established a good reputation in securing places at either Oxford or Cambridge with ten of the 1999/00 group progressing to one or other of those universities.
9. The school's determination to maintain high standards and to improve where possible is shown clearly in the reviews of examination performance held between senior managers and departments. There are generous plaudits where deserved and challenging questions where results are deemed not to be high enough. This applies to both GCSE and A-level examinations.

Relationships are excellent and at the heart of much which the school achieves

10. The school has created a thorough but uncomplicated system to promote high quality relationships. Much stems from simple premises. It is made eminently clear to students what is expected of them and what contribution they are expected to make and in the great majority of cases students respond accordingly. In a school of 1137 students not all meet these expectations all the time but there are very good support systems to ensure that the will of the great majority prevails. Formal interviews with Year 11 and the sixth form and informal discussions with students around the school provide much evidence of the value which students place on relationships engendered by the school. Members of the administrative staff who have a good overview of the school also picked this out as one of the distinguishing features when asked what they thought were the best features of the school. They too make a significant contribution to that process which was also noted by some parents in individual letters written to the inspection team.
11. Students learn much from the examples set by the school. Year 7 get off to a good start as a result of being visited at their previous school before starting at Queen Elizabeth's despite there being 69 feeder schools for the 2000 entry. They are made to feel that the school cares about them and respond by taking responsibility for fostering the kind of relationships from which they have benefited. Students of all ethnic backgrounds are totally integrated in lessons and in activities around the school. Academic and pastoral guidance are interwoven which gives a stability in which relationships can flourish. There have only been rare occasions when the school has failed to satisfy parents that this is so. A few individual letters written to inspectors by parents drew attention to isolated examples of 'silly' behaviour by some students in Year 8, but the school has this in hand, and such behaviour was not apparent during the inspection.
12. The relationships fostered give students confidence and freedom in expressing their views. An official booklet composed by Year 7 to pupils in primary schools about to transfer to Queen Elizabeth's is evidence of this. There are many nice touches which begin to cement relationships such as 'we all know that coming to a new school can be very scary, so we hope that our booklet will settle your worries and set you off in the

right direction'. They recognise the importance of form prefects who 'help you with your homework if you get stuck and will also look after you if you're ever feeling a bit upset'. On bullying, future students are reassured by comments such as 'I haven't seen any bullying around the school so just don't worry'. Giving students a fairly free rein allows them to get to the heart of what might concern pupils in primary school, some of whom will be the only pupils moving to Queen Elizabeth's from their particular school. Students' views are also sought by the school and taken into account, a factor appreciated by students interviewed during the inspection. They are made to feel that they matter.

13. The confidence given to students is not built on false premises or on an unrealistic assessment of their abilities. If written work is not up to the standards of which students are capable they are expected to repeat that piece of work which they usually see as fair. There is zero tolerance to anyone who defaces property as that is spelled out in the school rules. Where it occurs it becomes a serious issue as observed in the address to students in one assembly during the inspection. The school makes no apology for the clear structure it provides for students and which helps mature relationships to develop. Parents are happy with this aspect of the school and the way the school is helping their children to become mature and responsible. Students too are happy in the relaxed but purposeful environment.
14. The school is far more than an institution which produces very good examination results. Other things are stressed too, including the aim of students leaving as well-balanced adults able to contribute positively to society. The emphasis on this is shown very clearly in the prospectus for the sixth form and the role which sixth-formers play in the school. Students are reminded that 'employers are looking for broad skills and seek out graduates who have interpersonal abilities, leadership, teamwork and oral communication skills, relevant work experience and community awareness which cannot be acquired by examination courses alone'.
15. The school does not take the stance that Years 12 and 13 should be separate from the school and that works for the benefit of all. The role which sixth-formers play in the school is impressive. They forge special relationships with students lower in the school as a result of the mentor system adopted. They are brought into further prominence through their contribution in organising activities in the flourishing house system. They have much contact with the head of sixth form who oversees their development and teachers in the sixth form cultivate excellent relationships but more regular contacts with other members of the senior management team are justified.
16. During the week of the inspection there were many examples in lessons of excellent relationships with few exceptions. The majority work extremely well with their peers and there is a healthy and mutual respect in nearly all cases between teacher and taught. Some Year 11 students lapsed in one lesson being less supportive than they should have been to their teacher and resorted to immature behaviour. Some students in Year 8 have established a reputation of being 'difficult' but that was not apparent during the inspection as a result of the interest generated in lessons and relationships established between teacher and taught. Teachers generate excellent relationships and derive many benefits from working in such an environment. In one sixth-form lesson in English the teacher was able to admit to the class that while they were busy the previous week in answering a 'mock' examination paper he too was busy in answering the paper. In doing so he admitted that he had to remind himself not to make the classical errors which he had told students to avoid. Such an approach leaves an indelible message. There was even a promise to the class that they would have the opportunity to see his answers. These sorts of relationships are typical of the

school and collaborative learning was a feature of the inspection.

17. Relationships are such that students are nearly always allowed to get on with their tasks without the interference of others and without fear of any derogatory comment. A particularly good example of this was seen in a Year 10 lesson in basic physiology examining the circulatory system, linked with fitness training. Some of this involved students hurtling across the playing field before measuring their pulses and similarly being engaged in quite a prolonged step exercise outside the classroom. Students' sole objective was to gear their efforts to the task set and the school atmosphere allows them to do so in an uninhibited manner.

The quality of teaching, including a significant proportion of exceptional teaching

18. The school has worked successfully in bringing about major improvements in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. The school was criticised at the last inspection for the lack of variety in teaching methods and was urged to improve the quality of assessment. It is now strong in both respects. The school has a talented and experienced teaching staff which has been skilfully nurtured and handled to bring out teachers' best qualities, to become more progressive, and to benefit from 'new blood' recruited in most but not all areas.
19. Teachers are very well prepared and some exemplary planning was seen in a geography lesson and in many other lessons across subjects during the week of the inspection. In a Year 9 lesson in science, for example, this helped in establishing crystal clear objectives from the outset when covering the topic of health and disease. Examples of high quality planning are numerous in sixth-form teaching. Lessons throughout the school get off to a quick and purposeful start which helps in maintaining momentum.
20. Teachers' subject knowledge is a considerable strength and seen to good effect in many lessons. Teachers are confident and at ease with their subject and this shows in the very high quality relationships established in lessons, the quality of questions which they ask of students, and the way they respond to questions asked of them. There are some very effective strategies in use in modern foreign languages and Latin to elicit responses from all students. In a Year 12 ICT lesson, on the security of data and computer systems, question and answer techniques were used to build very successfully on students' natural interest in the topic. Skilled use of question and answer techniques in mathematics with Year 13 students was reinforced by work on the white board of exceptional clarity. Students in the same year in geography in dealing with climatic changes made very good progress aided considerably by the teacher using questioning techniques to recap and ensure understanding by all. The lesson also included some very good use of computers.
21. Expectations are nearly always high and in music this has led to Year 7 students having well above average levels of understanding and performance after just over one term in the school. High expectations in the teaching of personal, social and health education (PSHE) in Year 8 resulted in some outstanding work in dealing with the topic of European Union countries. Similar results were seen in mathematics in a Year 8 and Year 10 lesson where the teacher constantly challenged students which resulted in an in-depth understanding of complex concepts related to probability. In a Year 12 lesson in design and technology on power supplies a combination of high expectations and methods used also ensured that all, including those who had not studied electronics at GCSE, understood and made excellent progress. Again a Year 9 class

in French made excellent progress rising to the high expectations to improve their skills in manipulating the language.

22. A variety of teaching methods secures involvement and interest. How descriptive passages can be used to improve the quality of writing was very well illustrated to a Year 11 class through the writing of Roald Dahl, when describing his first sighting of Dar es Salaam as he looked out of the porthole of his ship beyond the 'vast rippling blue-black lagoon' and the 'amazing tropical scene'. A Year 8 class in English, considered challenging by some, made great strides in understanding a difficult text from Hamlet through a collaborative learning exercise involving teacher and taught in translating extracts, such as 'give every man thine ear', into modern English usage without losing sight of the beauty of the original language. Similar methods were employed successfully with a lower attaining Year 9 class in studying Twelfth Night where printed explanations of 'surfeiting' (eating too much), 'strain' (tune) and 'cloistress' (nun) allowed students to access and appreciate Orsino's famous speech 'If music be the food of love play on.....' A very good brainstorming exercise in a business education lesson in Year 11 led to the compilation of a flow chart on job recruitment with the teacher using her own experience of applying for a post at the school to add reality and interest. A combination of teachers' expertise and methods employed in music captured the attention of students in lessons observed.
23. A consistent thread running through lessons is the very good management of students and an appreciation of their needs. The odd word of encouragement was enough in one physical education lesson to make all the difference between a student completing a challenging fitness test rather than dropping out. Students being introduced to rugby in Year 7 are being carefully handled to accommodate those who take readily to physical contact sports and those who are more wary. As a part of managing students, humour is well used but sparingly rather than in any self-indulgent way in many lessons. This was apparent in music rehearsals, in the teaching of Latin, in a Japanese lesson in the sixth form, in English in Years 8 and 9 in explaining delicate gender matters in the teaching of Shakespearean text, and in well-chosen snippets in other lessons throughout the school.
24. Discussion is used productively to engage enthusiastic students in their learning. Year 7 students seized on opportunities presented to discuss and explore issues such as a Muslim pilgrimage in religious education and the role of women in Roman society in history. There was an excellent initial discussion in geography in Year 11 to arrive at a definition of 'development'. Some outstanding discussion was generated in some mathematics lessons, and in a Year 7 PSHE session on safety lively discussion evolved around the topic of hazard prevention.
25. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural issues are carefully interwoven into lessons or dealt with as opportunities arise, for example on racism in a Year 9 lesson in French. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Students following the short course in religious education in Year 11 were carefully led through a lesson on matters of life and death with sensitive discussion on recent dilemmas facing the medical profession and the courts. A concise 'spiritual development' policy in the school has helped staff to realise what they are already doing in relation to spiritual matters and the further potential which they have in their subjects.
26. Time is extremely well used and lessons rarely flag. The use of time in a lesson in ICT with Year 8 when dealing with databases could not have been better in the 35 minutes available. Only occasionally do lessons peter out. Firing questions at students towards the conclusion of some double lessons keeps them on their toes and ensures

that they have been listening during the lesson.

27. Homework is used well and is followed up in lessons with a very good example noted in a Year 9 Latin lesson used to consolidate learning. Homework is usually set with sufficient time allocated at the end of the lesson but there was a refreshing example in Year 7 history lesson, when it was set at the outset so that students would know exactly what was being looked for when writing an analytical rather than descriptive piece of work. The time which should be spent on the homework was stressed so that enthusiastic students did not place too much pressure on themselves. This is good practice in teaching the importance of time management and in preventing highly motivated and young students from spending all of their free time on homework, a factor which concerns some parents.
28. The quality of assessment, criticised at the last inspection, is now very good. Marking is mostly very good and ongoing verbal feedback in class in particular is accurate, constructive and of high quality. The latter was evident in mathematics when a new topic was being introduced in mechanics to Year 12 and where there was constant checking to ensure that students understood. Tests on entry plus national test results from primary schools give a good starting point to assess students but records from primary school do not cover all subjects. Design and technology teachers have been particularly pro-active in building up data over the last five years on the skills which pupils bring with them at the age of eleven in order to plug the gaps. Examination results are scrutinised and action taken to improve where necessary. In art, for example, measures are currently being taken to tighten up on the quality of coursework in order to target C/D borderline candidates more effectively. This should be matched by an equal emphasis in art and elsewhere on ensuring that any potential A* candidates are informed of, and encouraged to attain, the standards which examiners are looking for in awarding such grades.
29. An impressive feature of teaching during the inspection was the way in which students' scripts from 'mock' examinations were returned and discussed. Invariably marking was of a high standard with succinct and accurate comments which enabled students to see exactly where they did well and where they went wrong. The accompanying discussion made the occasion stimulating rather than merely ploughing through stock answers. A well-organised 'study-buddy' system was exceptionally well used in a science lesson in Year 11 with those students who had difficulty in answering questions being helped by those who understood. In music in the same year a review was usefully used to inform students of what examiners are looking for when awarding the highest grades.
30. Even when lessons were judged to be less than very good overall there were usually some very good features. Few lessons failed to live up to these standards and were not indicative of any serious weaknesses in the school. Where lessons were judged to have weaknesses they failed to inspire students, paid too little attention to what students were actually learning and did not involve the class sufficiently with question and answer techniques employed so successfully elsewhere in the school.

The provision and quality of music throughout the school is of a very high standard

31. The number of students involved in extra-curricular activities is very high. Over 200 take instrumental lessons. There is a rich range of opportunities with a school choir, orchestra, string ensemble, junior and swing bands, piano groups, junior and senior wind bands, horn and saxophone ensembles and a house music competition. A senior

band rehearsal observed one lunchtime during the week of the inspection was rigorous, reached excellent levels of attainment and proved to be as enjoyable for the inspector as for the participants. Boys and girls were well represented across most instruments.

32. The highly informative governors' annual report to parents also highlights a number of regular concerts and performances. Open Evening performances in September are followed by December's annual 'Carols for All' and 'Swing into Christmas' concerts. Letters to inspectors from parents sum up the impact which such activities make on the school and local community. Typical comments from parents are 'it was a pleasure to watch such an excellent performance by all participants who were thoroughly enjoying themselves' and 'the appearance, behaviour and performance of the children were excellent and made us feel proud that our children are involved in such activities and derive much enjoyment from them'. At the pre-inspection meeting for parents most considered music to be 'fantastic'. The only dissenting voices amongst the great enthusiasm of parents were a few who drew inspectors' attention to the lack of opportunities for students who wish to perform using electrical instruments not taught in the school.
33. The standards seen in lessons during the inspection were very high with examples of excellent teaching. As reported elsewhere the percentage of A* grades achieved at GCSE is consistently above average for selective schools. The basis for this is laid right from the first term of Year 7 where students develop a very good sense of rhythm when playing together and where musical interpretation is of a high standard for that year group. Other very high standards were observed in Year 10 in GCSE compositional work where students having written lyrics were setting the words to music. In the sixth form, students start from a very strong base established earlier in the school and have very high levels of technical competence. In a Year 12 class one student was able to use her powerful voice to particularly good and moving effect in portraying emotion. Able and articulate young musicians in the sixth form assess their own performance and that of others with accuracy and sensitivity reflecting the excellent example set by teachers.
34. Opportunities for an even wider range of students to participate in musical activities are provided by inter-house competitions, largely organised by sixth-form and other students. As a result of their expertise and interest, students are also involved in activities with other groups outside the school further establishing the musical reputation of the school in the area.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Results in National Curriculum tests at the age of 14

35. The school measures the progress of students in Years 7-9 in several ways including comparisons made between the levels achieved in national tests at the age of 11 and 14 and comparisons made against testing on entry to the school. Using all these measures it is clear that students make positive progress and that habits of learning are ingrained in Years 7-9 which allow much to be achieved at GCSE and beyond.
36. The progress made in Years 7-9 is not however reflected sufficiently in some of the results achieved in national tests at the age of 14. Whilst results in 2000 were very high in comparison with all schools they were well below average compared with grammar schools nationally and below average in 1999. Results lack consistency, for example English results were average compared with grammar schools in 1999 but

not in 2000. Science results were average compared with grammar schools in 2000 but not in 1999. Except for science in 2000 the main difference between the school's results and those for grammar schools was in the percentage of students achieving the higher Level 7 or above in the examination (Level 5 is the expected level at the age of 14).

37. The school is very good in assessing its strengths and areas for improvement. Whilst it legitimately questions some aspects of a strict comparison with grammar schools, as attainment on entry to such schools varies nationally, it has recognised in its development plans that National Curriculum test results are in need of some 'fine tuning'. Inspectors agree with this.

The proportion of A* grades at GCSE

38. In 2000 the total percentage of A* grades achieved (8%) was higher than average compared with all schools (3%) but below average for selective schools (16%). Strict comparisons with selective schools nationally should be tempered by the fact that Queen Elizabeth's admits a wider range of students than is usual for selective schools. However inspectors agree with the school's assessment that in order to build further on the very good achievements at grades A*-C one of the next targets should be to increase the percentage of A* grades achieved.
39. There were big differences at this top grade between the performance of boys and girls in both 1999 and 2000. Whereas girls were above average for girls in nearly all subjects at A* compared with girls in all schools nationally, as they should be in a selective school, boys' results were below average for boys in all schools nationally in several subjects. Other than this boys achieve exceptionally well at all stages in the school, both in relation to boys nationally, and in relation to the performance of girls at the school.
40. The school performs very much better at A grades than at A* grades. Thirty-one per cent of all grades achieved by the school in 2000 were at A grade which is very good. This shows that more A* grades are within the reach of a substantial number of students.
41. The highest percentages of A* grades in 2000 were achieved by music (45%) and ICT (19%). Inspectors saw much evidence of why this is so with a great commitment by the school to developing ICT and very high standards observed in music. Music has been consistently above average compared with selective schools at A* for the last three years.
42. Improving the percentage of A* grades, as with any other grade, would contribute to improving the average points score per student at GCSE. The school is already average compared with grammar schools when measured by the average points score per pupil. In 2000 it would have been necessary to have increased the average points score from 61.7 to 63 to have been above average. This is within the reach of the school.
43. The aim to improve the percentage of A* grades is a regular feature of departments' post summer review of examinations. Teachers' minds are therefore already focused on this issue. It is also a feature of school development plans. Some good systems and challenges are already in place to stretch the most able but most of the attention has been on borderline C/D candidates at GCSE, a process which has been very

successful. Students capable of A* grades have not been sufficiently targeted by departments so far. In setting such targets the important factor should be on credible and realistic individual subject targets rather than strict whole-school targets.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

44. In order to improve standards the governors and senior management should:

Improve results in National Curriculum tests at the age of 14 by:

- more specific target setting for individual students in Years 7-9 to replicate the best systems used at GCSE and in the sixth form;
- heads of departments of English, mathematics and science pursuing common strategies where relevant and systematically monitoring students' progress;
- students having a clear understanding of the National Curriculum levels and what they have to do to achieve them particularly the higher Levels 7 and above;
- ensuring greater consistency in results to reflect more accurately what the school is already achieving in Years 7-9.

Improve the proportion of A* grades at GCSE by:

- all departments setting targets to increase A* grades;
- identifying potential A* candidates and involving those students to a greater extent in understanding what is required to achieve an A* grade;
- encouraging boys to attain as highly as girls at A* and monitoring progress towards that end;
- senior management monitoring progress by departments with a leadership role taken by the deputy head with responsibility for the curriculum.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	85
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	13

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
13%	40%	29%	14%	4%	0	0

The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.

Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7-Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	1137	249
Number of full-time students known to be eligible for free school meals	15	0

Special educational needs	Y7-Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	1	0
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	47	3

English as an additional language	No of students
Number of students with English as an additional language	25

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of students
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	9

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	4.2
National comparative data	5.9

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	0.4

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	80	100	180

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	79	80	80
	Girls	100	99	100
	Total	179	179	180
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	99 (99)	99 (99)	100 (97)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	71 (93)	92 (97)	94 (92)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	77	80	78
	Girls	99	100	98
	Total	176	180	176
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	98 (99)	100 (99)	98 (99)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	71 (80)	91 (97)	79 (80)
	National	31 (31)	39 (37)	29 (28)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	86	91	177

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	87	88	88
	Girls	87	89	89
	Total	174	177	177
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	98 (95)	100 (98)	100 (98)
	National	47 (47)	91 (91)	96 (96)

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per student	School	62 (61)
	National	38 (38)

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied	School	0	N/a
	National		N/a

Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	45	62	107

Average A/AS points score per candidate	For candidates entered for 2 or more A-levels or equivalent			For candidates entered for fewer than 2 A-levels or equivalent		
	Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	26	28.0	26.5 (27.2)	n/a	7.5	7.5 (6)
National	17.7	18.6	18.2 (17.9)	2.6	2.9	2.7 (2.8)

Figures in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year

(The school's own detailed and very good analysis confirms that the most successful departments vary from year to year but in terms of actual results and in relation to students' previous attainment subjects which figure prominently are English, French, geography, law, music, physics, psychology).

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number in their final year of studying for approved vocational qualifications or	School	0	N/a

units and the percentage of those students who achieved all those they studied

National

N/a

Ethnic background of students

	No of students
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	8
Black – other	2
Indian	23
Pakistani	6
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	4
White	1060
Any other minority ethnic group	22

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	1	0
White	1	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7-Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	63.9
Number of students per qualified teacher	17.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Education support staff: Y7-Y11

Total number of education support staff	11
Total aggregate hours worked per week	320

Deployment of teachers: Y7-Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	78.3
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Average teaching group size: Y7-Y11

Key Stage 3	24.7
Key Stage 4	21.4

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	2,613,602
Total expenditure	2,614,962
Expenditure per pupil	2,395
Balance brought forward from previous year	115,730
Balance carried forward to next year	114,370

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1137
Number of questionnaires returned	725

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	42	49	7	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	46	50	2	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	42	50	2	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	58	12	3	2
The teaching is good.	42	51	2	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	36	50	12	1	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	49	42	5	2	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	75	25	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	26	52	14	2	5
The school is well led and managed.	52	39	1	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47	45	3	1	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	29	47	13	2	9