

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **DARTFORD GRAMMAR SCHOOL FOR GIRLS**

Shepherds Lane  
Dartford

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 118883

Headteacher: Ms Jane Wheatley

Reporting inspector: Ms Sheila Browning  
1510

Dates of inspection: 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> October 2001

Inspection number: 191287  
Short inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Grammar (Selective)

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11-18

Gender of pupils: Girls

School address: Shepherds Lane  
Dartford  
Kent

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Joy Rayner

Date of previous inspection: 27<sup>th</sup> January 1997

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3731	William Robson	Team inspector	English	
1413	Sa'ad Khaldi	Team inspector	Sciences Biology Chemistry	
22723	Bob Hartman	Team inspector	Physics 6 <sup>th</sup> Form co-ordinator	Leadership and management
18648	John Rowley	Team inspector	Psychology Sociology	
14573	Hugh Wareing	Team inspector	Geography	
4243	Tony Freeman	Team inspector	History	
12110	Roger Bailess	Team inspector	Spanish	
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

With 997 pupils aged 11-18 Dartford Grammar School for Girls is similar in size with other secondary schools nationally. However, the sixth form is larger than in other schools nationally. Since the last inspection the school has become a Beacon School. It has been oversubscribed for the last four years and has 128 more pupils than at the time of the last inspection. Attainment is much higher than average on entry reflecting the selective nature of the school. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs at 2.4 per cent is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals, at 2.7 per cent, is well below the national average. The school is proud of its multi-ethnic diversity and the percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language, at 5.3 is higher than in most schools. The school serves a wide catchment area. Pupils come from a broad cross-section of urban, social backgrounds including some areas of high deprivation.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

This is an outstanding and very effective school. At the time of the previous inspection the school was already achieving a great deal. Pupils are guided and supported well in achieving very high standards of attainment. The pupils are taught very well through a relevant and enriched curriculum enhanced through a wide range of extra-curricular provision. Taking into account the very high quality of leadership, the standards achieved, the proportion of good and very good teaching and learning, the cost of educating each pupil and the overall effectiveness of the school, that the school provides excellent value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Standards are very high. The proportion of pupils obtaining 5 or more GCSE passes at A\*-C and A\*-G is very high.
- Very good teaching leads to very good learning.
- The quality and range of the curriculum, including the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and extra-curricular activities, are particularly good.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour, relationships and their personal development are excellent.
- Attendance is excellent.
- The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher, her deputy and other senior leaders supported by a very effective governing body.

#### **What could be improved**

- The higher levels achieved in mathematics are not as good as those in English and science for similar schools at the end of Year 9 and at A level.
- The proportion of pupils who stayed on into the sixth form at 76 per cent was not as high as in previous years at the school.

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

The strengths of this very effective school far outweigh its minor weaknesses.

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in January 1997. Improvement has been very good. This is a very effective school that has a shared desire for continued improvement in pupil performance, teaching and learning and the quality of education and provision. The quality of teaching and learning is very good across the school and across subjects and it has improved significantly since the last inspection. As a result standards achieved are very high. The quality of leadership is excellent. This school provides a stimulating and exciting learning environment. The attitudes, behaviour and relationships of pupils are excellent. Very good procedures for assessment, recording and reporting pupils' work and progress are now in place for all subjects across the school. Specialist accommodation is vastly improved: a dance studio, two laboratories, five general classrooms, extra rooms for music and a design (graphics) room have been added. Surplus space in mathematics,

science, humanities, and modern foreign languages has been converted for the provision of information and communication technology (ICT) for pupils. The school now builds upon the learning and skills developed by pupils in Year 6 and it has forged a good liaison with the feeder primary schools. The school provides excellent value for money.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and sixth form students at the end of Year 13 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*	A
A-levels/AS-levels	A	B	B	

Key	
very high	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

The above table indicates that GCSE results in 2000 were very high when compared to all schools nationally and were well above those schools in similar circumstances. Results were amongst the highest 5 per cent nationally. Over the past three years GCSE results have remained very high when compared with the national average. The trend in GCSE results based on the last five years was above the national trend. In the 2000 National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds, overall attainment in English, mathematics and science was very high and above national averages. When compared to similar schools, results were above average in English and science but were well below for mathematics. The trend over the last five years in National Curriculum tests was broadly in line with the national trend. The school exceeded the challenging targets set. In A level results the percentage of grades A and B, passes at 40.3 per cent, is good and the average percentage of A/B is in line with the A to B in A level. A level results show that in 2000 on the basis of the average point scores of candidates entered for two or more GCE A levels or AS equivalent results were above the national average and those for similar schools. The trend over the last three years was well above the national average. Standards of literacy and numeracy are very high overall and improve as pupils move up through the school.

Current standards in lessons and in work seen are very good in all subjects. Pupils achieve very well in relation to their prior levels of attainment. Overall, pupils with special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language achieve very well in relation to their levels of attainment on entry to the school. Higher-attaining pupils make good progress.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to the school are excellent. They work hard and are determined to do their best. Pupils have a high level of respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is excellent. Pupils are friendly, courteous and helpful to one another, staff and visitors.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils strive to do well and achieve the targets they have set for themselves and those set by staff. They take responsibility for their own work and make the most of the many varied opportunities provided. They are fully involved in the life of the school.
Attendance	Attendance is excellent.



## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	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.*

The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good across the school. In over two-thirds of lessons in Key Stages 3 and 4, teaching is very good and excellent. In just over six out of ten lessons in the sixth form teaching and learning is very good and excellent. In well over nine out of ten lessons across the school teaching is good and it is never less than satisfactory. English, mathematics and science and other subjects are all well taught. Particular strengths are the consistency of very good quality teaching across subjects. This promotes and consolidates pupils' learning. The school meets the needs of all pupils very well. Pupils are keen to achieve well and very good progress is seen in their developing knowledge, skills and understanding.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The National Curriculum is fully in place. The enriched curriculum prepares pupils most effectively for the next stage of their education. Enrichment opportunities and extra-curricular activities are strengths of the curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with special educational needs are provided for appropriately. Pupils are identified early and their individual needs are addressed.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school has a high number of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL). Their language competence is such that it does not constrain their learning and they make very good progress.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good overall. The caring and positive environment underpins and enriches all aspects of school life.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The care and support provided for the pupils is very good. Pupils are well cared for, their welfare is assured and their working environment is safe. The school is very sensitive to the religious and cultural needs of groups of students from diverse backgrounds.

The school works well with parents. There are good links with the local community. The parents are very positive about the school and support the many different functions which are well attended. Parents have been very supportive in their funding of developments in the school. All pupils follow a short GCSE course in religious education. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 can take Latin as an additional subject leading to examination level.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership by the headteacher is strong and effective. She is well supported by her deputy headteacher and senior leadership team. Subjects are well managed and the work of the school is carefully monitored. The school has excellent monitoring systems. The skill of the business manager is a key factor in the school's success.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors work very effectively. They have considerable financial expertise that they offer generously. They are well informed about the strengths and weaknesses of the school. The chair of governors is particularly active and her work has a positive impact on school development.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The desire to improve performance is central and underpins much of the work of the school. In place are efficient systems that are used effectively to evaluate its performance.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very efficient use of its funding and resources through prudent financial management. A good example is the effectiveness of the expenditure on the recent up-grade of curriculum ICT and facilities.

There is a very good match between suitably qualified teachers, support staff and the curriculum. Space is at a premium and the site is small. Accommodation is satisfactory in teaching areas. Space is used efficiently and learning is not usually impeded. The pupils' displays of work around the building are of a very high quality. The school applies the principles of best value efficiently.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School's expectation of hard work.</li> <li>• Pupils like school.</li> <li>• Progress made is good.</li> <li>• Quality of teaching is good</li> <li>• School is easily approachable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More links with parents.</li> <li>• Right amount of homework.</li> <li>• More information about pupils' progress.</li> </ul>

Over 370 responses and over 30 written responses were received. Many parents felt unable to respond fully to the questionnaire as their daughters had only just started at the school. The majority of written comments were positive about the standards achieved, the quality of teaching and learning and the general management of the school. Inspection evidence confirms the parents' positive view of the school. The school has the usual number of meetings for parents and endeavours to keep in close contact with them. Parents receive good quality information on the school's activities and about pupils' progress. Reports are detailed with information on what pupils have achieved and how they can improve. The inspection judgement is that homework is provided appropriately and is used well to support the pupils' learning.

**INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The sixth form with 248 girls is much larger than other sixth forms nationally. Over recent years the numbers in the sixth form have increased steadily. The percentage of students receiving free school meals at 2.7 per cent is low. The number of students with special educational needs at 2.4 per cent is low. There are many students from ethnic minorities and the school is proud of its ethnic and cultural diversity. The sixth form provides a wide range of subjects and offers enrichment courses including a Key Skills course that all students follow. A majority of the main school pupils continue onto the sixth form, although stay-on rates have been significantly higher in previous years. Additionally between 30 and 40 students join the sixth form from other schools. Students wishing to join the sixth form must have gained 6 A-C grades at GCSE as well as a grade B or higher in the subjects to be studied at A level, or, if a new area is to be studied, in a related area showing comparable skills. It is expected that students will have achieved a Grade C or above in English language and mathematics. A few exceptions are made for individual circumstances. The 16+ examination results are excellent and reflect the very good progress made by pupils joining the sixth form. All students start on two-year programmes leading via AS to A2 level.

**HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS****Strengths**

- Standards are well above average at A and AS level.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- The quality and range of the curriculum, including the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and extra-curricular activities are particularly good.
- Pupils' attitudes, behaviour, relationships and their personal development are excellent.
- Attendance is excellent.
- The quality of leadership by the headteacher, her deputy and leadership team supported by the governing body is excellent. The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is very good and its cost effectiveness is also very good.

**What could be improved**

- The higher grades achieved in mathematics are not as high as those in English and science at A level.
- The proportion of students who continued on to the sixth form at 76 per cent, was not as high as in previous years at the school.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the governors' action plan. Strengths and areas for improvement in individual subjects are identified in the sections on individual subjects in the full report.*

## THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

The table below shows overall judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses that were inspected in the sixth form. Judgements are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	<b>Satisfactory.</b> In 2000 almost half the students entering GCE A level achieved the two highest grades. Overall standards were in line with the national average. Standards of work are above average reflecting the good teaching and learning.
Biology	<b>Very good.</b> Results show consistent improvement and are above the national average. Teaching and learning are very good and sometimes excellent.
Chemistry	<b>Very good.</b> Results show consistent improvement and are above the national average. Teaching and learning are very good and sometimes excellent.
Physics	<b>Very good.</b> In 2000, A level results were well above the national average. Teaching and learning are very good.
Business studies	<b>Very good.</b> A level results were above the national average in 2000. This represents good improvement from previous years. Teaching and learning are very good.
Computer studies	<b>Very good.</b> Very good teaching leads to high examination results and very good student achievement.
Art & design	<b>Very good.</b> Results in 2000, were well above the national average. Over twelve students gained A*/A grades. Teaching and learning are very good.
Theatre studies	<b>Very good.</b> In 2000, results were well above the national average. Teaching and learning are often excellent.
Geography	<b>Good.</b> Standards are improving at A level with 50 per cent of students achieving either A or B grades. This is above national averages. Teaching and learning are consistently good.
History	<b>Good.</b> Results continue to be above the national average. Teaching and learning are very good.
Sociology	<b>Very good.</b> The most recent A level results were broadly in line with the national average. Teaching and learning is good overall.
Psychology	<b>Very good.</b> Results are well above the national average. Psychology at A level and particularly at AS level is an increasingly popular subject. Teaching and learning are very good.
English Literature	<b>Very good.</b> Standards are very high and are well above national averages. Teaching is generally good, well paced, with a variety of activities to develop and reinforce the good learning. The development of students' capacity for independent learning is a particular strength.
Spanish	<b>Good.</b> Up to 2000 no accurate comparisons can be made in relation to national standards as group sizes have been small. Standards of work seen are above average. Teaching and learning is good overall.

Work was also sampled in other subjects, for example, the three separate Key Skills of communication, application of number and ICT. Also work was seen in citizenship, geology, design and technology, religious education and personal and social education. Teaching ranged from excellent to good. Standards and progress made were very good.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The school's provision for the educational and personal support of sixth form students is very good. Students are supported well through the tutorial system. Students greatly appreciate both the effort put into this aspect by teachers and the high quality of advice that they provide. The assessment system and target-setting used to identify students' attainment and progress are also very good.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The headteacher, deputy headteacher and leadership team provide decisive and strong leadership. There is a shared and pervading commitment to producing high standards coupled with the support of each individual. The organisation to provide support and guidance for students is very good. Statistical information to monitor individuals' and different groups' progress is well managed. Educational priorities are supported well by very good financial planning and an outstandingly successful quest for best value.

Students are very positive about the school in all its aspects. In discussions with inspectors they said that they were given good support and guidance about examination courses and requirements. They said that the teachers were friendly and helpful and gave them very useful information about how to improve the quality of their work.

## COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

*Inspectors make judgements about provision in subjects and courses, and about leadership and management, in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement "outstanding" in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to "very weak".*

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

**Standards are very high. The proportion of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSE passes at A\*-C and A\*-G is very high. Standards are above average at A/AS level.**

1. Attainment, for pupils when they enter the school in Year 7 is well above average, reflecting the selective nature of the school. In the 2000 national tests for 14-year-olds, overall attainment was very high and above national averages in English, mathematics and science. When compared to similar schools as measured by the percentage of pupils eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs, these results were also above average in English and science but were well below for mathematics. The school has significant data that indicates that when joining the school, pupils have lower levels of attainment in mathematical skill than in English and science. However, the trend in mathematics is an improving one and the gap is closing. The school does not have data on entry for every pupil as some come through the private sector. It is also interesting to note that the school says fewer pupils took the national tests in mathematics due to absence or holidays. To prevent this happening again the school is informing parents earlier and again nearer the time of the tests. The trend over the last five years for 14-year-olds was broadly in line with the national trend. The school results for the 2001 national tests show that the percentage of pupils achieving the higher levels 6 or above in English and mathematics improved, and results for science were close to those achieved last year. Currently there are no national comparatives for this data. The improved results reflect the ability of the pupils and the value added by the school. Teacher assessments in history and design and technology show considerable improvement on the previous year. Teacher assessments in geography, modern foreign languages and information and communication technology (ICT) are not as good as the outstanding results in the previous year. Comparative data is not available for art and design, music and physical education. The leadership and management of the school have investigated the reasons for lower attainment in geography, modern foreign languages and ICT and in many instances have addressed those issues. The remaining ones continue to be addressed appropriately.
2. GCSE results in 2000 were very high in comparison to those obtained nationally and were well above average in comparison with schools in similar circumstances. Results were amongst the highest 5 per cent nationally. The most recent school results show that the percentage of pupils achieving 5 A\*-A GCSE grades has risen again. The average GCSE points score achieved by Year 11 pupils in 2000 was 66.6 per cent which exceeded the upper quartile benchmark for grammar schools. In relation to their levels of attainment when joining their courses, pupils make very good progress and advances in all subjects. In fact the data supports the school's effectiveness across the full range of subjects. Of particular note were results in English, mathematics, science, business studies, geography, drama, history, information and communication technology, French, Spanish and German. When comparing relative subject performance, pupils achieved less well in physical education, other languages, art and design, design and technology and English literature, although these results still remain significantly above the national average. The school has effectively analysed all results and has put into place expedient measures to address those areas that appear to be less successful. For example, schemes of work and syllabuses have been reviewed. In some instances courses and examination boards have been changed. The school has also appealed to the examiners in respect to the

English results and the outcomes have been favourable. In the second set of changes forty six results moved up; improving both the A/A\* rate and 5 A\*-C rate. This level of reflection on and response to attainment is part of the culture of continuous improvement at the school. The attainment of pupils with special educational needs is in line with, and in a large number of cases above, the grades predicted based on prior attainment. Pupils for whom English is an additional language and other groups of pupils make the same very good progress on previous learning as that of their peers and often exceed predicted levels of attainment. Over the past three years, GCSE results have remained very high when compared with the national average. In 2001, 79 per cent of the pupils achieved 10+ A\*-C grades; this is a further improvement.

3. A level results were above average in 1999 and 2000. In 2000 on the basis of the average point scores of candidates entered for two or more GCE A levels or AS equivalent results for the last three years were well above the national average. The percentage of students achieving 4 A-E grades at A level increased from 6 per cent in 2000 to 7 per cent in 2001. The A level point score put the school in the top 100 schools in the country over a five year period. The school is skilled in the analysis of the students' attainment, looking for reasons for any dip in standards and taking appropriate action. The school is aware that several students choose to leave to follow the International Baccalaureate as an option. The school proposes to offer this in the sixth form from September.
4. In lessons and work seen, very good standards are achieved in all subjects. Students achieve very well in relation to their prior levels of attainment. Students who have been identified as gifted and / or talented are provided with many good opportunities to extend their knowledge, skills and understanding. For example, Year 9 pupils sampled AS critical thinking and took this up as an option in Year 10. The school is implementing and developing further strategies, enrichment, management and identification of pupils with special educational needs and for those pupils identified as gifted and / or talented.
5. Standards of literacy and numeracy are very good overall and pupils build on skills and knowledge as they move up through the school. Subjects such as English, drama, and citizenship and personal, social and health education where pupils' oral skills are extended are a particular strength.
6. All students take a technology GCSE course and gain an appropriate qualification in ICT. This provides a very good basic standard in applications such as word processing, spreadsheets and databases that they can extend into other subjects where there are opportunities. The improvement in the use of ICT across curriculum subjects is significant in Years 7, 8 and 9, so that by the time they reach the age of 14, the majority of students' competence and confidence in using computers is well above average.

**Very good teaching leads to very good learning.**

7. Pupils are well taught throughout the school. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good across the school. In over two-thirds of lessons in Key Stages 3 and 4, teaching is very good and excellent. In just over six out of ten lessons in the sixth form teaching and learning is very good and excellent. In well over nine out of ten lessons across the school teaching is good and it is never less than satisfactory. English, mathematics and science are very well taught. Particular strengths are the

consistency of very good quality teaching across subjects. The teachers are enthusiastic and are committed to the pupils and school. They form a self-critical group, supporting one another well. The school has a rigorous programme for professional development and training. Each member of the leadership team supports other teams of teachers in the school. The school has set clear aims for improvement in teaching and learning and it is monitored both internally and externally by members of the leadership team and the governing body. The school has also coped particularly well with the turnover of a third of the teachers in the past two years. Most of these have been part time posts. The full time staffing situation is quite stable. The quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly since the last inspection.

8. A strength of the teaching is the secure knowledge, expertise and enjoyment of their subject, which is often enthusiastically shared with their pupils. Teachers have high expectations and work is well matched to the ability of the pupils. In the best lessons teachers set suitably challenging tasks. Another strength of the teaching is the teachers' use of discussion and debate, enabling pupils to voice their own views and opinions. For instance in a Year 9 English lesson studying 'Of Mice and Men', pupils confidently asked further questions of the teacher as to how to make presentations on the book interesting. They planned the presentation well and showed good reasoned argument and debate. They convinced another pupil of the validity of including a book full of violence, racism and poor language. As a result pupils gained in confidence and extended their appreciation and understanding of different viewpoints. Clear presentations and analysis of work are strong features evident in many lessons. For instance in a Year 10 ICT lesson, pupils engaged in a Power Point presentation including sound and text and created a slide show. Pupils were set very clear targets by the teacher who then monitored their progress well.
9. The very good teaching promotes and consolidates pupils' learning. Explanations are clear, and questioning is effective in moving pupils' learning forward and helping them recall previous learning. In a Year 8 music lesson pupils built on their prior knowledge and experience of pentatonic scale and performed short compositions to the class. They recognised chromatic scale and knew about ostinato and could explain differences between major and minor scales. In a Year 11 art and design lesson, pupils constantly reinforced their knowledge and application of key skills and techniques learned. For example, when researching a personal response, pupils used information from their recent visit to the Tate Gallery for inspiration. Pupils had researched different artists and it was evident that their own work was influenced by this.
10. Building on what pupils understand and know is another positive feature. For instance, in a Year 7 science lesson about distillation, the teacher checked that the pupils used the correct language; also, that they understood words such as condenser and transverse section whilst conducting an experiment. Accurate use of specific subject related language supports pupils', increasing understanding. This is a strength throughout all subjects. Key words are often highlighted and / or glossaries and key notes are provided. In another Year 7 science lesson about dissolving and separating, high quality structured notes were shared with the pupils. Teachers use open-ended question well to further elicit understanding of concepts and ideas. For example in a Year 8 mathematics lesson, the teacher presented clear investigations which were well explained and through excellent questioning reinforced the pupils, understanding of perimeter, rules and formulae when looking for patterns.



11. The teaching of literacy is reinforced by appropriate homework to provide many different opportunities for pupils to consolidate their knowledge and understanding. Homework set is purposeful, challenging and is used well to reinforce learning.
12. The pupils thrive in the classroom environment; they are keen and eager to learn and to succeed. Teachers also work hard to present suitably challenging work that stimulates them. For instance, in a Year 8 English lesson, pupils worked in pairs in preparing interviews between Jonathan Swift and an interviewer about Swift's new book. Pupils enjoyed discussing their forthcoming 'radio interviews' and understood that Swift was critical of his own government. In the critical appraisal that followed pupils were very supportive of each other and they were stimulated by this approach. Good opportunities are provided for accelerated learning in lessons. A range of visits and visitors to the school motivates pupils and promotes their learning.
13. The quality of teaching for pupils with special educational needs is good. The school identifies pupils early and good provision is in place. The school has a high number of pupils with English as an additional language (EAL). Their language competence is such that they make very good progress.
14. On-going assessment of pupils' learning and developmental needs is very good. Teachers give constant feedback, also support and praise. Assessment data and performance data are effectively analysed by staff and it is well used to inform future teaching and learning.
15. Pupils are keen to achieve well and very good progress is seen in their developing knowledge, skills and understanding. For example in a Year 11 chemistry lesson, pupils used ICT for their data logging investigations. They then manipulated and printed graphs and evaluated their findings carefully. Pupils are effectively encouraged to develop as independent learners and in many lessons this is a strong feature of the very good learning. Pupils make clear advances in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Pupils' intellectual, physical and creative efforts are developing well.

**The quality and range of the curriculum, including the provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and extra-curricular activities are particularly good.**

16. Pupils are offered a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum. The curriculum provides a very good educational experience for all pupils. At the time of the last inspection the curriculum was described as 'unique', and it remains a strong feature of this school. The requirements for the National Curriculum are met. The requirement for collective worship is met. Each subject is allocated an appropriate amount of time. Personal and social education (PSE) and awareness of drug misuse are incorporated well into the overall programme for PSE.
17. There is a very strong commitment to equality of opportunity for all pupils. This is reflected throughout the school. The school recognises the importance of respect for different cultural backgrounds and the encouragement of social, racial and cultural harmony. Pupils are well integrated at this ethnically and culturally diverse school. The school welcomes the multi-ethnic nature of its intake and values this as one of the strengths of the school. Literacy and numeracy are delivered well in all subjects, as is ICT which has been a developing focus and priority for the school.

18. At Key Stage 3, pupils are able to study art, music, drama, and dance as well as the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, together with geography, history, religious education and physical education. Pupils also study technology and in Year 7 a modern foreign language, and they can choose an additional language in Year 8. All pupils study for an ICT based GCSE in Key Stage 4. Citizenship has a strong profile in the curriculum.
19. The curriculum offered at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form meets the challenges of the twenty first century well. All pupils have the opportunity to take a short GCSE course in religious education, which fulfils the statutory requirement. Pupils can also study Latin at Key Stage 4. There is an extensive range of courses offered at GCSE, A and AS level. Additionally there is good range of business languages, ICT opportunities and general studies. Students can choose from a wide range of A level subjects. Non-traditional girls' subjects such as mathematics, chemistry and physics are popular options in the sixth form. All students follow a core programme, designed to give a broad and balanced experience. The number of courses offered at (31) for advanced study is wide ranging.
20. In addition to AS levels students have the opportunity to study a new foreign language for travel or business use. The core programme also includes study skills, an information and communication technology course, religious education, physical education and a good personal and social education (PSE) programme. Health education, sex education and drug misuse awareness and careers guidance are all incorporated into this effective programme.
21. The school is committed to a work-related curriculum and broadening the horizons of its pupils. There is a strong work-related curriculum leading to an annual 'Challenge of management conference. A good work experience programme is in place with numerous opportunities in a wide variety of areas. In the sixth form, students are offered a work placement abroad. In addition, they may undertake career related work shadowing.
22. Provision for Key Skills is good overall and it is offered as part of students' optional activities in the sixth form. This is a pilot scheme and will be reviewed at the end of the school year. The courses are well supported and the intention is to increase curriculum provision for all three Key Skills, depending on the review. Subject areas make appropriate provision. The school also promotes the wider Key Skills well, such as working with others, study skills and problem-solving throughout the curriculum.
23. The school has effective individual strategies for helping gifted and talented pupils. These are being further developed, as are the strategies for supporting those pupils with special educational needs. For example, this year a group of Year 9 pupils were offered the opportunity to study AS level in critical thinking and took this as an option in Year 10. Pupils with a particular aptitude for a language or music may be exempted from parts of the National Curriculum in Key Stage 4 to enable them to develop their aptitude.
24. Extra-curricular and enhancement activities, some of which are residential and take place abroad, also enrich the curriculum offer as they did at the time of the last inspection. The school provides numerous opportunities to broaden the pupils' experience and help raise their self-confidence. Pupils participate in many sporting activities both within school and in the local area. School teams compete in athletics, dance, gymnastics, swimming and equestrian events. The school has just won the

cross-country running championship. Music also features strongly; there are choirs and orchestras, which are extremely well attended. The school holds regular concerts and performances. Drama productions are another strong feature of the enriched curriculum.

25. The school has a strong commitment to supporting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The provision is very good. The school promotes a sense of Christian values and beliefs whilst not neglecting those from different cultures. Pupils have good opportunities to experience aspects of spiritual development during lessons and assemblies. Pupils confront and explore different views and beliefs, as for example in science relating to life cycles. Opportunities for reflection are planned for throughout the curriculum.
26. The school has high expectations of how pupils should behave. These are well documented and clear. The high expectations are well understood by the pupils and their behaviour is excellent. The staff provides very good role models; they show respect for pupils. Pupils work well together and support one another well. Relationships between pupils and pupils and staff are excellent. Pupils are polite and courteous. The school is a racially harmonious school. Pupils are also encouraged to join the Philanthropic Society, environmental committee, Youth in Action, or Meals on Wheels, and to be involved in community work with the voluntary service unit.
27. Provision for social development is very good. There are numerous opportunities for visits and residential trips in the UK and abroad; for example students have participated in work experience in Rotterdam, Rostock, Dunkirk, Spain, Switzerland, Germany and France. The school provides many events for pupil participation and the pupils organise events themselves, for example, the school council, and house events. Prefects accept responsibilities. Extra-curricular clubs are wide ranging and are very well attended.
28. Within the curriculum there are planned opportunities to broaden and extend pupils' cultural awareness. Regular visits are made to the theatre, galleries, museums and local places of interest. The school is committed to interaction with the community and values and successfully broadens the experience of girls through its links with both European and international communities. Multi-culture is valued and celebrated at the school. Many pupils come from a wide cultural background and this diversity is celebrated throughout every aspect of school life.

**Pupils' attitudes, behaviour, relationships and their personal development are excellent.**

29. Pupils' attitudes to the school are excellent. The school promotes excellent standards of behaviour. Good procedures are in place and are understood by all. Pupils move about the school in a calm and purposeful way. They work hard and beyond the minimum requirements of their lessons. Pupils are conscientious, mature and act responsibly. They enjoy the many opportunities for greater responsibility that they are offered, for example within the house system and school council. They organise extra-curricular clubs and charitable events. Behaviour is excellent both in and outside of lessons and strongly contributes to the high standards achieved. Pupils are courteous and polite to each other, teachers and visitors. The personal development and relationships of pupils are excellent throughout the school. This is an improvement since the last inspection. There has been one permanent exclusion and four fixed temporary exclusions involving the same pupil. There were many instances

observed in the inspection when pupils were supportive of one another and were sensitive to each other's views, demonstrating that they too share the aims of the school. They are trustworthy and kind.

30. Pupils work well collaboratively and independently and this was in evidence throughout the inspection. They are very serious about their work but also have a good sense of humour. Their determination to work hard and to succeed are strong contributory factors to the very good learning and standards achieved. There were several occasions when pupils readily praised each other's efforts. They are encouraged to work towards challenging targets and they recognise the value of this. Several pupils said how helpful and useful they found individual target setting and that this helped them to improve their work.

**Attendance is excellent.**

31. The attendance rate at the school in the 1999-2000 academic year was excellent and was very high compared with the national average. The rate of attendance for the school was 95.4 per cent compared to 91.3 per cent nationally. The rate of unauthorised absence at the school, in the same year, was well below the national average. The rate of unauthorised absence for the school was 0 per cent compared to 1.1 per cent nationally. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Punctuality is good throughout the school. The procedures to promote good attendance are thorough and effective. The school complies with the legal requirements. At the parents' meeting, parents understood their responsibility in terms of notifying the school of absence. Several said that their daughters had been well supported through ill health or long-term absence.

**The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher, her deputy and other members of the leadership team supported by a very effective governing body.**

32. The overall quality of leadership and management is excellent. The headteacher, who joined the school recently, provides a clear educational direction and high expectations for all.
33. She is most effectively supported by her deputy and the leadership team. Management is well structured, with all members of the senior team having clear roles and responsibilities. Expansion of the leadership team has enabled the school to review roles and responsibilities. Members are accountable, well informed and share a common purpose. Together, the headteacher, leadership team and the governing body strive for improvement. Leadership is decisive but recognises the value of consultation and negotiation. The heads of faculties, heads of departments and working committees are the main consultative bodies and they work effectively. The administrative team support the day-to-day running of the school well. The commitment, expertise and dedication of the senior managers are positive contributory factors to this successful school.
34. Heads of faculty and heads of department have a good awareness of their roles in monitoring standards, teaching and learning. The monitoring of teaching focuses acutely on sharing of good practice and identifying the needs for professional development. This has had a significant impact on staff awareness of their strengths and on areas for improvement. Supportive systems are in place which enable the school to monitor and evaluate its effectiveness and how to further improve. The school achieved its Investors in People Award in 1999 and this structure helped the

school in setting up the structures and policy for performance management. The systems support the good training and performance management programme.

35. Heads of year are fully involved in pastoral issues and act as a direct link between home and school and between the school and outside agencies. They are starting to monitor levels of learning and work closely with tutors as learning managers.
36. Developments are implemented, managed, monitored and evaluated efficiently. Regular review and discussion of the way the leadership team carry out their jobs has resulted in extending the use of ICT throughout the administration network with a corresponding improvement in efficiency and communication.
37. The school has a very detailed record system, which tracks pupils throughout their time at the school. These are discussed in faculties, and with the link member of the leadership team. Last term the job descriptions for the heads of faculty were reviewed and reorganised into three sections of Leadership, Management and Administration. This has clarified the leadership element of their roles within the school.
38. The governors are very informed about the strengths and weaknesses within the school and they are actively involved in all its facets. They work closely with the headteacher and school. The usual committees are in place as is the documentation required for parents. Information about pupils with special educational needs is loose leafed in the prospectus the school plans to put this in the body of the prospectus so as to ensure it is permanent. Governors are involved in monitoring standards, teaching and learning through the faculty link governor. The chair of governors is particularly well informed and plays a wide and active role. Members of staff regularly give presentations to governors. Governors are in a good position to make informed decisions and participate fully in the recognised priorities of the school.
39. Governors' financial expertise has been used well and their knowledge combined with that of the very efficient business manager has led to significant saving and wise expenditure. Funding received by the school is spent appropriately. The funding and resourcing set aside for the provision of pupils with special educational needs are clearly directed to the teaching and learning of these pupils. The school has set aside funding to introduce the International Baccalaureate in September. Considerations of income and expenditure are prudently dealt with. Governors have ensured that all statutory requirements are met.
40. Challenging targets for improvement are continuously set and are being met. A positive feature of the school is the shared commitment for such improvement. The school has the capacity to improve further and has the structures and personnel in place for this.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

**The higher levels achieved in mathematics are not as good as those in English and science for similar schools at the end of Year 9 and at A level.**

In the 2000 National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds, overall attainment in English, mathematics and science was very high and above national averages. When compared to similar schools, results were above average in English and science but were well below for mathematics. In mathematics in 2000, almost half the students entering GCE A level achieved the two highest grades; overall standards were close to above average. The percentage of students achieving A to B grades at 48 per cent was in line with the national average. Over the last four years, the trend in average points has fluctuated, falling from 1997 to 1999 but rising again in 2000. The results in 2001 show a drop in the proportion of students gaining the highest grades and a subsequent fall in average points. The school has data that clearly indicates that these pupils on entry to the school showed lower achievement levels in mathematics than in English and science in the Key Stage National tests. This information has been used to adapt the teaching and learning methods used in order to further raise attainment in mathematics.

(Paragraphs 1, 41).

**The proportion of pupils who stay on in the sixth form at 76 per cent is not as high as in previous years at the school.**

The rate of retention from Year 11 to the sixth form at 76 per cent is not as high as in previous years at the school, although, it does reflect high levels for the immediate locality. Students opted for the International Baccalaureate at another school. The school intends to offer the International Baccalaureate in September. (Paragraph 47).

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

The issues relate both to the main school and the sixth form.

1. Pursue the strategies already implemented to further raise achievement at the higher levels in mathematics for pupils in Years 9 and 13.
2. Increase the rates of retention in the sixth form by implementing the planned course in September for the International Baccalaureate.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7-11	38
	Sixth form	58
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		50

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7-11</b>							
Number	9	17	10	2	0	0	0
Percentage	24	45	26	5	0	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	9	27	20	2	0	0	0
Percentage	16	47	34	3	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	749	248
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	14	3

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	2
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	25	6

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	51

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.6
National comparative data	7.7

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	1.1

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 (Year 9)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2000	n/a	148	148

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	145	147	142
	Total	145	147	142
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	99 (98)	99 (98)	97 (96)
	National	63 (63)	65 (62)	59 (55)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	95 (95)	97 (94)	93 (92)
	National	28 (28)	42 (38)	30 (23)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	146	148	146
	Total	146	148	146
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	64 (64)	66 (64)	62 (60)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	96 (98)	99 (96)	96 (96)
	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 (Year 11)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2000	n/a	116	116

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Girls	114	115	115
	Total	114	115	115
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	98 (97)	99 (98)	100 (99)
	National	47.4 (46.6)	90.6 (90.9)	95.6 (95.8)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	66 (66.6)
	National	38.4 (38.0)

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

### Attainment at the end of the sixth form (Year 13)

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	n/a	225	225

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	n/a	19.1	19.1 (18.6)	n/a	5.1	5.1 (3.0)
National	n/a	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.

### **Ethnic background of pupils**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	9
Black – other	3
Indian	53
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	16
White	221
Any other minority ethnic group	5

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7– Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	55.891
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.2

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	217

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.8
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13**

Key Stage 3	27
Key Stage 4	22

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	17
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	19

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **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	0	0
White	3	0
Other minority ethnic groups	1	1

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

### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000-01
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	£
Total income	2661632
Total expenditure	2605259
Expenditure per pupil	2629
Balance brought forward from previous year	71084
Balance carried forward to next year	127457

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	997
Number of questionnaires returned	367

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	48	46	5	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	42	49	2	0	7
Behaviour in the school is good.	31	58	2	1	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	57	15	2	3
The teaching is good.	36	55	2	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	29	47	12	3	10
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	45	6	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	67	31	1	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	22	51	17	3	7
The school is well led and managed.	28	53	5	1	13
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	44	4	1	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37	40	9	3	12

### Other issues raised by parents

Some 30 written comments were also received from parents. Many were very positive about the standards achieved, the good quality teaching and leadership of the school and the stimulating learning atmosphere. A few were concerned about inconsistencies with homework and languages choices. Several parents felt they were unable to respond adequately to the Ofsted questionnaire as their daughters had only just started at the school.

## PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

## HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

### Results and students' achievements

41. In 2000, the average point score for the proportion of students who were entered for two or more GCE A levels or AS equivalent was above the national average for all maintained schools and for all post 16 providers. The average point score for the proportion of students who were entered for less than two GCE A levels or AS equivalent was well above the national average. When compared with similar selective schools these results are very slightly below the average point score per student. It is useful to note that nationally there are a small number of selective schools and for the purposes of comparison they are all grouped together. Selection procedures vary across the country and locally. Dartford Grammar School for Girls selects from the top 25 per cent of pupils and this is a broader ability band than for many schools in the national grammar school group. On the basis of the average for the last three years, results were well above the national average.
42. Strengths were evident in many subjects and results were above average for all maintained schools. Results in the 2000 examinations were well above average in art and design, communication studies, computer studies, English literature, English language, French, other social studies and physics. Results were above average in biology, business studies, chemistry, design and technology, general studies, German, history and music. Results were in line with the national average in classical studies, geography, mathematics and sociology. Results were below the national average in sports studies reflecting the prior ability of the group of students. School results for 2001 show improvement. The results in 2000 in physical education were better than the previous year. In 2001 overall 63 per cent of A levels were awarded grades A, B or C.
43. Where only a few students were entered for the examination it is not possible to make a statistical comparison, however all those students entered for the examinations in geology and Spanish achieved at least A\*-E grades.
44. Over the last three years the average A/AS level point score per candidate entered for two or more GCE A levels or AS equivalent, whilst remaining above the national average has fluctuated. Results peaked in 1998. At the same time the average GCSE point score on entry has risen. The school has evidence that indicates that many students who achieved 5 or more A\*-C grades at GCSE and particularly the higher grades took the decision to transfer to other providers who offered the International Baccalaureate. At the present time active consideration is being given to adoption of this as a possible public examination post 16. The school has over the years accepted a wider intake from outside. Almost all students see courses through to completion, meeting individual targets / goals and move on to higher education or employment. The percentage of students achieving 4 A-E grades at A level increased from 6 per cent in 2000 to 7 per cent in 2001. In 2001 fourteen students achieved all four AS subjects at A grade and 98 per cent obtained at least two passes. The new headteacher has since changed the school targeting of predicted A level grades from A to C grades to A to B which matches A level criteria. This change is already beginning to have a positive impact on standards achieved.

45. A comparison of the relative performance of subjects within the school in 2000 indicates that results in biology, business studies, chemistry, theatre studies, computer studies, English literature, English language, general studies, psychology and sociology, were significantly better than in other subjects.
46. School results for 2001 show further improvement, however, currently there is no national comparative data for the 2001 results. Of the 122 students in Year 12 entered, 98 per cent achieved 2 or more AS passes, 91 per cent achieved 3 or more AS passes and 75 per cent achieved 4 or more AS passes. In 2001 the average point score per AS entry was 3.1. Students achieved good results and fourteen students achieved 4 grades A's. Students in mathematics achieved above average results.
47. Of the 123 students in Year 13 entered, 95 per cent achieved 2 or more A level passes, 90 per cent achieved 3 or more A level passes and 64 per cent achieved 4 or more A level passes. The average point score per student at the school was 7.5 compared with the national average point score of 6.3.
48. Initially the great majority of students showed interest in returning to the sixth form. The school undertook a survey and the outcomes showed that although the sixth form offered a wide range of courses, some students preferred to take the International Baccalaureate. A significant proportion of those who did not return had opted to take the International Baccalaureate. The rate of retention from Year 11 to the sixth form at 76 per cent this year was not as high as in previous years at the school, although it reflects high levels for the immediate locality.
49. Currently the standards being achieved in the sixth form are very good and students are making very good progress. They are suitably challenged in all subjects. Students achieve very well in relation to their prior levels of attainment. Overall, students with special educational needs, including visually impaired students and those for whom English is an additional language and other groups achieve very well in relation to their levels of attainment on entry to the school. Higher-attaining pupils make good progress.
50. Standards achieved in the sixth form in the three separate Key Skills of communication, application of number and ICT are good. Key Skills is offered to students at Level 3 as part of their optional activities. The programme is flexible for the students, to allow different levels of involvement and they are generally achieving well.

### **Students' attitudes, values and personal development**

51. Sixth form students' attitudes to the school are excellent. They work hard in a very pleasant yet purposeful atmosphere that reflects the high esteem the students and staff have for one another. Relationships between the different ethnic and cultural groups represented in the sixth form are excellent. The students are mature. They act responsibly, yet they display an air of enjoyment that supports a very effective work ethos. Their behaviour is excellent. The constructive relationships formed with the staff, other adults and one another are excellent, and this aspect has improved since the last inspection. Students are keen to question, yet have a high level of respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others. The students strive to do well and achieve the targets they have set for themselves and those set by staff. Students use their study-time effectively and follow up assessments and teachers' advice. Students are

encouraged to use their initiative and not to rely too much upon members of staff. They take responsibility for their own work and the management of their time.

52. Sixth form students are involved significantly in the life of the school by supporting younger pupils in a variety of roles, by acting as prefects, house captains and as deputies assisting the head girl. Students readily accept responsibilities, for school social activities, for fund-raising and working with charities such as "Help the Aged". They also take opportunities to extend further their understanding and knowledge of spiritual, moral and cultural issues, through debate and extra-curricular activities. Sixth form students work co-operatively with the students from the nearby schools on a number of activities including the schools' annual Management Conference. Attendance is very good. There are a few isolated cases of irregular attendance but usually it is explained absence.
53. Sixth form students add significantly to the rich social and cultural activities of the school, yet they are able to work independently towards challenging targets. They have very well, developed attitudes and skills that will enable them to enrich society and to continue to learn in adult life. Students demonstrate that they have the capacity to work independently, as well as to study and work with others. Sixth form students have very high levels of attendance. The students' views of the school are that it is an excellent place to be.

#### **HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

54. The very good teaching and learning is a major contributory factor for the sixth form being successful. Teaching shows significant improvement than at the time of the last inspection. This has been a focus since the last inspection and the school has set clear aims for improvement in teaching and learning. In just over six out of ten lessons in the sixth form, teaching and learning is very good or excellent. In almost all lessons it is good and in a very small minority satisfactory. Particular strengths are the consistency of very good quality teaching across subjects. This promotes and consolidates students' learning. Students are keen to achieve well and very good progress is seen in developing knowledge, skills and understanding.
55. A major strength is that teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of their subject. This is often shared enthusiastically with students. Teachers use a variety of successful techniques and approaches to hold and maintain students' interests. Teaching of basic and higher order skills is very good.
56. The teaching of the three separate Key Skills, communication, application of number and ICT are taught well overall. English is also taught well across the curriculum. They are identified in lesson planning and are taught with the intention of supporting students as independent learners this is being achieved appropriately. In some subject areas development is at an early stage. The use of ICT is particularly well used and taught in chemistry, physics, art and design, sociology, psychology. It is not as well developed in biology, business studies and geography. It is appropriate in other subjects.
57. Lessons are planned thoroughly with good supporting materials and they can be stimulating and interesting in delivery. For instance in a Year 13 business education lesson about investment appraisal, the lesson was thoroughly planned and incorporated several Key Skills. Another example was in a Year 12 biology lesson about the biochemistry of carbohydrates and fats. In a Year 12/13 chemistry lesson

about investigating temperature, the teaching was well supported by high quality worksheets and a good plenary session. Learning objectives are clearly shared with students. Tasks are suitably challenging. In a Year 12 computing lesson the teacher gave a clear exposition of executable statements (computer codes) and developed the students' understanding of the basic elements of programming languages. Students rapidly copied the code and became aware of the consequences of missing out statements in the sequence of the code. Activities and demonstrations are well presented. In both Years 12 and 13 theatre studies lessons, excellent methods were used to enhance voice projection, interpretation of character and analysis of text. Teachers expectations of what students know and can achieve are very good. In a Year 13 physics lesson on spectra the teacher constantly challenged students about what they saw and if they could explain it, thereby reinforcing their understanding. Teachers use effective teaching methods. In a Year 12 geography lesson about flood hydrographs the teacher used good questioning techniques and regular feedback to ensure accuracy and to encourage students further. Particularly good is the use of recapitulation and use of specific terminology. Technical language is introduced and used well.

58. Many opportunities are provided for students to engage in discussion, give presentations and debate with each other. In a Year 12 psychology lesson about case studies the presentations given by students were exceptional. The teacher managed the presentations with great skill and provided sensitive feedback. Students are encouraged to undertake independent research and they do so confidently. In a Year 13 art and design lesson, students confidently searched various web sites to extract information for their studies of different artists. Students are encouraged to use and handle a wide range of resources such as in a Key Skills lesson when students considered different ways of presenting information. They analysed text and extracted factual information, considered using an overhead projector, a white board, a flip chart and the use of a computer presentation program.
59. Teaching in the sixth form meets the needs of all students well. The quality of teaching for students with special educational needs including those visually impaired is good. Those who are gifted and / or talented are suitably stretched and challenged. Although the sixth form has a high number of students with English as an additional language (EAL) their language competence is such that they make very good progress.
60. The quality of teacher–student relationships is excellent. Teachers know their students well. Individual target-setting is proving to be a useful and valuable asset in raising both teacher and student awareness about progress. In discussion, students said how much they appreciated the time teachers take to explain their progress and what they need to do to improve. Written comments in work are supportive but evaluative and help students improve the quality of their work.

#### **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS?**

61. The quality and range of the curricular provision is very good. However, the school does not meet the recommended provision to complete the units within the locally agreed syllabus for religious education for students in Years 12 and 13. The provision for a daily act of collective worship is met. The curriculum provides a very good educational experience and effectively supports the school's overarching aims: 'to place students' learning at the centre of all we do; to develop a success culture for all

members of the community to improve the continuation of learning from 5-19; to match student potential with actual achievement and exceed; it to increase the integration of global, technological developments into the daily learning of students; to develop an open-door partnership with the local community. The strength of the curriculum is in the importance the school places on the individual person, on personal expression and on opportunities for everyone to enjoy study and life in the sixth form. The range of subjects offered at advanced level is very good. Students may choose four AS levels as a basic course in Year 12 and there is a very wide range of subjects to choose from. Students can continue studying subjects followed at Key Stages 3 and 4 and additionally study citizenship, critical thinking, geology, government and politics, psychology, performing arts, theatre studies and sociology.

62. In Year 13 students may progress with all of their AS levels onto A2 courses or alternatively choose to carry on with three choices and take up a new fifth course at AS level. They can take up to 2 A2 courses and an extra 2 AS level courses. The majority take the 4+ model. Each subject is allocated an appropriate amount of time. The commitment to equality of opportunity and inclusion is strong.
63. All students follow a core programme, designed to give a broad and balanced experience. The number of courses offered at (31) for advanced study is wide ranging. In addition to AS levels, students have the opportunity to study a new foreign language for travel or business use. The core programme also includes core skills, an information and communication technology course, religious education, physical education and a good personal and social education (PSE) programme. Health education, sex education and drug misuse awareness and careers guidance are all incorporated into this effective programme. In addition, all students participate in a successful 'Challenge of Management' Conference in the summer of Year 12. This is a major conference supported by a team of industrial and business advisors. Students work in teams on 'real' management issues for two and half days. They produce a business plan and make a presentation at the end of the conference. This gives them a worthwhile insight of emerging issues. As a result students are fully engaged in practical and very good first hand work-related educational experience.
64. Provision for Key Skills is good overall and it is offered as part of students' optional activities. Three separate Key Skills– Communication, Application of Number and ICT–are being offered to students at Level 3 as part of their optional activities. This is a pilot scheme and will be reviewed at the end of the school year. The introduction of the Key Skills programme has been well managed. It is flexible, allowing different levels of involvement for the students. It is intended to support students as independent learners. The courses are well supported and the intention is to increase curriculum provision for all three Key Skills, depending on the review. Subject areas make appropriate provision. Departments are asked to identify opportunities in their courses for using Key Skills, and to witness achievement, and this is happening, in English Literature for example, though in its early stages. Students are expected to use subject work to develop their portfolio, while the taught time supports them in particular skills. The school also promotes the wider Key Skills well such as working with others, study skills and problem-solving.
65. The majority of students are developing the Key Skills of ICT use and information research well. Teaching is well planned and students' progress is well monitored. Students make full use of the network rooms and the library. Communication has two taught periods in the two-week timetable, ICT has one, and Application of Number will have a conference day in each term. The courses are well supported.



66. Great care is taken supporting students with their subject choices when they join the sixth form whether for university or employment. The provision complements other local and different provision accessible to students. Unusually for this year some 24 per cent of students did not continue on to the sixth form. The entry criteria is that students must have gained 6 A-C grades at GCSE as well as a grade B or higher in the subjects to be studied at A level, or if a new area is to be studied, in a related area showing comparable skills. It is expected that students will have achieved a Grade C or above in English language and mathematics. A few exceptions are made for individual circumstances.
67. The school has responded well to the nationally adopted post 16 curriculum pattern from September 2001. The destination of leavers, over the previous 2-3 years, shows a high record of success, the majority of students apply for university. Thirteen students successfully applied for Oxbridge this year. A large number of students go on to follow science and mathematics based courses. In 2001, 3.2 per cent went on to further education, 72 per cent to higher education and 16 per cent to employment with 8 per cent described as 'other', normally a gap year before joining higher education.
68. The curriculum is considerably enriched by a excellent range of extra-curricular activities. These include extensive involvement in, for example, the Philanthropic Society and the environmental committee. Students are encouraged to be involved in community work with the voluntary service unit, Youth in Action, or Meals on Wheels, Young Enterprise; and to do work experience in the United Kingdom or overseas. Students have participated in work experience in Rotterdam, Rostock, Dunkirk, Spain, Switzerland, Germany and France. They develop leadership skills by working with younger pupils, travelling overseas or following the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme. There are also many cultural and sporting overseas links in which they can take part. The community is well used as a resource.
69. Students have many opportunities to take responsibilities, as for example organising school clubs and activities such as computer studies and drama for younger pupils. The school council and committee groups are also run and organised by members of the sixth form. Elections are held for head girl and deputies, house captains and prefects. During the school year there are numerous visits and visitors. Recent visitors have included students from Austria and Poland on study visits and Czech students on a cultural exchange. This affords good opportunities for students to learn about different countries and cultures.

### **Spiritual, moral social and cultural provision**

70. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall. It is very successful in that it is consistent and that spirituality engages with a sense of school community. The house system is a strength and sixth form house captains with their deputies provide role models in house assemblies. They communicate directly to pupils with minimal support or guidance from staff. This generates a strong feeling of student responsibility and growing independence. School assemblies reinforce this sense of community and purpose and offer time for reflection as well as key spiritual themes and sometimes a thought for the day.
71. The caring and positive ethos of the school creates an environment where the spiritual provision can flourish. A house assembly was led by two sixth form students

where pupils were invited to make soft toys for Christmas for less advantaged children. During an assembly older sixth form students communicated to younger pupils their expectations of community service, pride in achievement and high expectation of collective effort.

72. Teachers have an awareness of the scope for spiritual and moral provision and use this within the curriculum. Some subjects such as English, drama, music and religious education contribute well in this area. The school has a strong choral tradition with religious music sung. In science, environmental, economic and industrial understanding is integrated into teaching, and students discuss and consider such matters in context. For example, a sixth form biology investigation was observed where students assayed the sugar contents of fruit juice and checked their results against commercial indicator strips for diabetics. This made them aware of hidden sugars and created understanding of diabetic conditions affecting different cultures and age-groups.
73. The social development of students is very good. The school promotes inclusive approaches in all of its policies and practices and this creates a strong ethos and sense of harmony. The aim of girls becoming well-educated young women is clearly being met. Many subjects are providing contexts for group work and the development of speaking and listening skills. There are opportunities for pupils to take responsibility in the general life of the school. The school's displays around its buildings are of a very high quality, they are both informative about standards, cultural diversity and celebratory of the achievements of the students at all levels. The school makes full use of its lunchtime to offer clubs in a wide range of areas. These are taken up by pupils of all years. For instance, badminton and table tennis currently attract students from Years 8 to 13. These pupils and students integrate in a shared activity that spans age and aptitude.
74. The opportunity for cultural development is a strength of the school. Outside agencies such as the VSU (voluntary service unit) and Youth In Action frequently assist the school and they also find community placements for students from year 10 upwards. Seven students had a summer research placement at a leading university. Many subjects through their day-to-day work and through additional curriculum visits offer pupils insights into the wider world. English, science, art, history, modern foreign languages, music, technology and religious education, provide experiences for pupils that enable them to appreciate their own and other cultures. Residential visits and outdoor education are well established. Also Japanese students join for a three-week study period. The cultural life of the school is very good.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?**

### **Advice, support and guidance**

75. The school's provision for the educational and personal support of sixth form students is very good. Students are supported through the tutorial system which is organised into groups of about twenty students. Tutors provide group and one-to-one contact and advice for both years in the sixth form. Students greatly appreciate both the effort put into this aspect by teachers and the high quality of advice that they provide.
76. From the head of sixth form down to individual tutors, members of the staff know their students very well and are able to tailor the help they provide accordingly. A tutorial lesson for second year sixth form students that focussed on the completion of their

UCAS forms was a particularly good example. When the tutor did not know the answer to a specific question, the tutor found it out and contacted the student immediately.

77. All the students spoken to, greatly appreciate the advice, support and guidance provided by the staff on personal matters. The school is very sensitive to the religious and cultural needs of groups of students from diverse backgrounds. As in the rest of the school, students are well cared for, their welfare is assured and their working environment is safe. The support and provision for students with special educational needs is very good and the support and provision for students with visual impairment is excellent.
78. A new system for monitoring attendance has been introduced for students in Year 13. This card system enables students to leave and enter school without manual registration and places responsibility on the shoulders of individual students for attendance yet allowing them to study or carry out research other than in school. They appreciate the freedom but recognise that their attendance at individual lectures will be checked and any absences followed up. The periods previously used for registration are now used for tutorial input, in addition to the timetabled tutorial lessons.
79. Careers guidance overall is good. It is of high quality for those students embarking on courses of higher or further education. For students electing to enter the world of work direct from the sixth form, this provision is not always so well targeted towards their individual needs. Where possible the school does try to provide relevant work experience for students and training in interview techniques. There are some opportunities for people from the world of work to become involved in the 'Challenge of Management' Conference; however, there is no evidence of talks by individuals to students in school about career opportunities or the provision of careers events targeted at job-seekers. The provision of careers advice and work experience opportunities is included in the personal, social education syllabus and these aspects are presently undergoing significant changes to their management.

## **Assessment**

80. The assessment system and target-setting used to identify students' attainment and progress are also very good. The system is regular, rigorous and supportive. The reporting of students' progress to those who need to know is very good. Parents expressed at the parent meeting that they are well informed about and receive good information on students' progress. Reports are detailed with information on what students have achieved and how they can improve.
81. Individual pieces of work are assessed and students are provided with accurate information about their achievements. Students confirm that they are provided with a clear picture of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve. The assessment system and the staff enable accurate diagnosis of students' learning needs and the provision of any additional help and support is thorough. Students feel that the staff and themselves have very good knowledge of their progress and the strategies in place to extend their learning. Students have felt that the implications of the new AS courses have not been easy for teachers or students to follow. In Year 13, the students appreciate the increased responsibility that they are given to achieve their targets.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND STUDENTS?**

82. Parents and students are very positive in their praise of the school. They agree that the school's sixth form provision is very good. The school is challenging, it provides a wide range of academic courses and a very full extra-curricular provision. Students and parents have a clear understanding of the school's aims and how it expects students to be involved in the life of the school. Students are fully involved in the school. They greatly enjoy the experience and are determined to contribute in a variety of ways to the richness of the school and its ethos.
83. Students confirm that the school is very supportive and that teachers and tutors provide very good quality advice. However, those students leaving the sixth form as job seekers did not feel that they had yet been given sufficiently appropriate information and guidance from school that would enable them to make fully informed choices and have the best chance of succeeding in their chosen career paths. In fairness to the school the very comprehensive' job seekers part of the personal and social education programme has only just started and students would not have had much support six weeks into their A2 course.
84. Students appreciate the greater responsibilities they are given, the use of the school's resources and the freedoms conferred on them especially in their final year. They all enjoy the very sociable atmosphere that pervades this very professional yet caring institution.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

### **Leadership and management**

85. The leadership and management of the sixth form is excellent and are wholly supported by the school's leadership team. The sixth form management is integrated with that of the main school. A sense of common purpose and good teamwork ensures that the provision of guidance, both academic and personal, is both effective and efficient. There is a strong sense of continuity for students joining the sixth form from the main school. Particular care is also taken to support students when joining the sixth form from other schools – this is thoroughly monitored.
86. The sixth form development plan is incorporated into the whole school development plan. New initiatives, such as Curriculum 2000, are taken on board with and benefit from early planning. At the present, active consideration is being given to adoption of the International Baccalaureate as a possible public examination post 16. This has involved a series of meetings to canvas staff opinion and to ensure that any possible policy change may be a considered one. There are five clear aims for the sixth form. They are appropriate and focus on preparing students for life-long learning. Students are well served by the overall school aims and values which pervade. Staff and students are committed to the attainment of the highest standards.

87. The day-to-day administration is good. It is assisted by the well-organised formal and informal flow of information to and from management. Indeed management sees one of its major strengths as identifying and swiftly responding to any student's problems, academic or personal. Students are aware of this and are very appreciative of it. Students are also grateful for the degree of accommodation possible to fit their choice of subjects. Students are "happy to be in school" and respond very positively to "being treated as adults, equal to teachers " and to "be able to ask for help at any time".
88. There is an above average focus on the monitoring and evaluation of teaching. This is combined with a strategy to encourage teachers to be more aware of different styles of learning and teaching. Managers evaluate the work of the sixth form methodically including the detailed statistical analysis of attainment data. The school compares its performance both with schools nationally and with similar schools. Appropriately challenging targets are set for both students and departments. The staff development programme supports new developments well. Newly qualified teachers are suitably supported. All these factors contribute to the very high quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form.
89. The governors play a first-rate part in shaping the sixth form's future. They keep a watchful eye on performance and challenge any perceived weaknesses. Although there is no specific sixth form committee, the governors take an active interest, particularly with matters relating to work experience, the annual management conference and citizenship. Their knowledge of industry is a useful asset. Each year the governing body receives a full report on the sixth form, which they read critically. All statutory requirements are fulfilled.

## **Resources**

90. The match of qualifications and experience of teachers to the school's curriculum is very good. The number of teaching staff is appropriate to meet the needs of the curriculum. The school has recently appointed a number of newly qualified teachers and other new staff across faculties. They are well inducted and supported in their professional development. Arrangements for the professional development and performance management of staff are good. The school has a good staff development policy. Training is planned and after consultation it is linked to the priorities of the school and personal professional development. The science department is well supported by technicians, although the school will wish to consider and periodically review the allocation given to more laboratories and sixth form use. Currently the two science technicians cover 8 laboratories and this ratio exceeds that of the notional indicator (one technician to three laboratories). The non-teaching staff make a valuable contribution to the life of the school.
91. Space is at a premium and the site is small. Since the last inspection significant improvements have been made. The school was required to review and improve accommodation in the last inspection. This has been done (using basic need bid money from the local education authority). Weaknesses of accommodation remain in business education and art and design where some learning is impeded. A dance studio, two laboratories, five general classrooms and a design (graphics) room have been added. Extra rooms for music and music practice have been added. Surplus space in mathematics, science, humanities, and modern foreign languages has been converted for the provision of ICT for students. The school management is aware that more space is needed. Work is currently underway to improve the swimming facilities.

There are plans for changing rooms for the swimming pool and two further music rooms. Accommodation is satisfactory in teaching areas. Space is used efficiently and learning is not usually impeded. The school's displays of art and textiles around the building are of a very high quality. Much of the work is exemplary and informative. It successfully celebrates the achievements of pupils and students at all levels.

92. Resources for learning in the school are good overall, and have shown some improvement since the last inspection in several areas, in particular art, science, ICT, now fully networked, and learning support for special needs. The improvement in the use of ICT across curriculum subjects is significant.
93. Information and communication technology is used well in chemistry when data-logging and in art and design for research. Design and technology make good use of digital cameras for design projects. Tutorial staff encourage students in Year 13 to use computers effectively to produce their Curriculum Vitae and develop personal statements for their university applications. There is insufficient use of computers for modelling problems using spreadsheets in mathematics, science, business education and geography, due partly to lack of available resources. Some teachers such as in mathematics and theatre studies produce good materials for visually impaired students. Training to increase staff expertise and confidence with computers is under way.
94. The library forms the heart of the school. It provides a good ethos for exploration on computers and for the use of up to 10,000 books in the quiet study and open reference areas. There is no chartered librarian, but a newly appointed librarian works well with the teacher in charge, who has recently introduced bar coding to monitor student usage of books. The ICT resource area in the library is booked for several lessons throughout the school and there are good resources for careers and university applications. Library stock overall is slightly below average, and many books both centrally and in departmental libraries, though in good condition are old. Yearly funding is satisfactory overall, with recent additions to funding providing more fiction. The ratio of books to students is better than it appears because of good departmental stocks, which many students prefer to use. A library committee has recently been formed with representatives from each faculty to develop the range of resources. Students in all years help run the library at lunchtimes. The library has shown satisfactory overall improvement since the last inspection, with good improvements in electronic-based resources such as CD - Roms.
95. Overall, through prudent budgeting, the sixth form makes good use of money saved through effective site management for additional purchases of resources for students' use. School staff makes very good use of technology for administrative purposes, including timetabling, academic monitoring of students' progress, and the analysis of examination results. One good recent innovation is the use of linked databases to identify girls who are habitually sick so that remedial action can be taken. From next summer a new database system will be used for more detailed annual reports to parents. The sixth form makes very efficient use of resources through prudent financial management.

## Efficiency

96. The business manager ensures that the best value is obtained for all expenditure; this is applied rigorously throughout the whole school including the sixth form. All documentation relating to practices and procedures as at the time of the last inspection, are of an extremely high quality. Day-to-day financial administration is excellent. Educational priorities are supported well by very good financial planning and an outstandingly successful quest for best value. Money is delegated to middle managers along with the freedom to use any suppliers. Competitive quotes are sought for all major items and the school keeps a list of companies and tradesmen who provide good service. Site staff are qualified tradesmen who can do the routine maintenance which saves considerable money. Optimisation of the work of part-time staff reduces the expenditure on staffing.
97. All major projects are carefully monitored throughout the work. The effectiveness of the expenditure on the recent up-grade of curriculum ICT is clear since it has led to significantly increased facilities. The governing body has considerable financial expertise; governors are fully involved at all stages and they receive regular reports and updates.
98. Overall, funding between the sixth form and the main school is equitable with small fluctuations from year to year. The last reporting year showed a slight overspend on the sixth form, but in the previous year the position was reversed. The skill of the business manager is a key factor in the school's success. Overall, financial planning, use of staff, resources and accommodation and the progress of students are very good. Unit expenditure costs are appropriate. The behaviour, attitudes and relationships and personal development of students are all excellent. The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good. Teaching is very good and the standards achieved are high. The cost effectiveness of the sixth form is excellent.

## PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, fourteen subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2000.

### ***GCE AS level courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	9	89	63	22	17	2.11	1.56
Chemistry	1	-	47	-	6	-	0.87
Biology	1	-	53	-	6	-	0.97
Physics	1	100	53	100	8	4.00	1.08

### ***GCE A level and AVCE courses***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	33	88	89	48	45	5.94	5.99
Chemistry	26	85	89	46	42	6.00	5.87
Biology	30	97	88	37	34	5.40	5.28
Physics	9	100	88	56	41	7.56	5.72
Other Sciences	4	100	89	25	31	4.50	5.19
Full design and Technology	5	100	92	-	29	6.00	5.37
Business Studies	26	100	91	31	30	6.15	5.34
Computer Studies	9	100	85	44	23	6.44	4.57
Sports/PE Studies	12	100	91	8	25	4.33	4.99
Art& design	15	100	96	67	45	8.13	6.42
Music	5	100	93	20	35	6.00	5.72
Dance	1	100	92	100	50	10.0	6.54
Geography	14	100	92	43	37	5.71	5.73
History	10	100	89	10	34	5.80	5.43
Religious Studies	2	100	91	100	35	8.00	5.57
Sociology	10	80	88	30	37	4.80	5.46
English Language	30	100	92	37	31	6.33	5.38
English Literature	24	96	96	58	36	7.42	5.90
Communication Studies	8	100	93	50	30	7.25	5.42



French	8	100	91	50	39	7.00	5.74
German	10	100	92	30	41	6.60	5.88
Spanish	2	100	90	50	40	6.00	5.75
General Studies	133	89	85	31	28	5.14	4.85
Other Social Studies	26	100	94	50	35	7.00	5.34

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### Curricular Area 1: MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

#### Mathematics

Overall, the provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**. Courses are offered in AS mathematics, AS applied mathematics and A L mathematics. All courses were inspected. Post 16 retention rates are favourable.

#### Strengths

- Teaching is good; lessons are well structured and include appropriate activities to help students learn.
- Modular structure of the curriculum enables students to select appropriate courses.
- Assessment is regular and marking is helpful.
- Students' attitude to their subject is very good.

#### Areas for improvement

- Results were disappointing this summer compared to last year.
- Access to ICT within the department is insufficient to support independent learning.

99. In 2000, almost half the students entering GCE A-level achieved the two highest grades. Overall standards were in line with the national average. At AS level results were above average. Over the last four years, the trend in average points score has fluctuated, falling from 1997 to 1999 but rising again in 2000. However, students did significantly better in mathematics than in the average of their other subjects. The results in 2001 show a drop in the proportion of students gaining the highest grades and a subsequent fall in average points. The examination results belong to a different group of students from those observed.
100. The standards of work seen in the sixth form during the inspection are above average. These standards are achieved because teaching is very good. Students are well motivated, work very hard and are provided with good resources. This causes the quality of their learning in mathematics to be very good. Overall, students' achievement in relation to their standards when they began in the sixth form is improving. The current Year 12 students seen have very good GCSE results and they are making good progress. Students with special educational needs and those gifted and / or talented are also making good progress.
101. Work seen in lessons and students files is above average, and better than the examination results might suggest. Before starting their sixth form studies, mathematics students complete a bridging unit. Any student whose performance on this unit is unsatisfactory is carefully monitored and supported during the early part of the course.
102. Teachers' knowledge of their subject is very good and is shown in the high standard of presentation of their work; examples of neat, logical solutions on the board set a good example of orderly work and promote good learning on the part of the students. In all the lessons time is used effectively. For example, teachers work carefully through new work, and more quickly through the routine calculations that are well within the students' capability. The pace of lessons is brisk and the work is challenging. Students are encouraged to think through a problem and suggest a method of solution and are guided by good questioning on the part of the teacher.

Teachers are well prepared with solutions to questions worked out in their own files. There are clear objectives for the lesson.

103. Students are encouraged to develop their independent learning skills. Homework is well planned for and set regularly, providing practice in the application of knowledge and skills acquired in lessons. Often in Year 13, there is an additional requirement to read ahead in preparation for the next lesson. In the library, some students make good use of software written for the modules in their courses; this supports their learning. Students pay full attention to explanations and then take effective notes for their files. Students are in no doubt what they have to learn and the skills they need to practise. Relationships between the students and their teachers are very good.
104. Overall the management of mathematics is good. The head of faculty ensures that all students have texts that are directly linked to the examination syllabus; students in Year 13 are issued with additional texts to keep at home for use as reference. This makes it possible for these students to broaden their range of exercises and examples and improves the quality of their learning. The school's aims and values are reflected in the work of the department: for example in its provision for students with special educational needs and in the relationships between teachers and pupils. Assessment of students' progress is good. Common tests for each module are set at key points in the course, grades are given and targets set or amended; hence students are aware of how well they are doing and what they have to do to improve their work. Performance management is conducted by the head of faculty and the head of mathematics. This has been instrumental in improving staff effectiveness and there is an open atmosphere conducive to improvement. Some need for in-service training has been identified, for example in connection with Decision Mathematics but it is proving difficult to find the right courses.
105. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Good standards of teaching and learning have been maintained. The teaching rooms are clustered together which allows for easy access and the sharing of resources. In order to redress the fall in results in 2001, the department intends to identify the possible areas of lack of knowledge and understanding by analysing the examiners' report, especially since this was the first year of this new syllabus.

## **Sciences**

All three sciences (biology, chemistry and physics) are offered at AS and A2 level. The focus was on these three areas which have large student cohorts. In physics, examination results were well above the national average in 2000, and they are above both in chemistry and biology. In biology it was observed that the student cohort had the widest spread of ability. Biology has a small number of students who take AS level in Year 13. Students who take up Chemistry and physics tend to have stronger mathematical aptitudes.

## Biology

Overall, the quality of provision is **very good**. The post 16 retention rates are very good.

### Strengths

- Results show consistent improvement, and are above the national average. Students have a good grasp of concepts, and across the ability range they are achieving well.
- Teaching is very good and sometimes excellent. The subject is well led and a good range of materials, equipment and books are used.
- Written course materials are of very high quality and marking is diagnostic and helpful to students.
- The targets for students that stem from the monitoring of their performance are well focused on learning goals and use assessment information well.

### Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT resources although clearly established in some areas, is not yet developed to benefit all students and in particular lower-attaining students.

106. The GCE A/AS level examination results last summer were above average. Almost all students who took the examination gained a pass grade and the proportion gaining the highest grades, A and B, was slightly above average. Very few students did not complete the course or have opted to repeat their AS year. In relation to their GCSE results students do well. Results in 2001 follow a general trend of steady improvement over the last four years and can be linked in value added terms from the students previous results.
107. The standards of work of current students are also above average. In Year 13, students are achieving well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. In the lessons seen, they were doing well as a result of very effective teaching that demanded much of them. The lesson structure and activities clearly focussed their learning. In one lesson, students compared bone structure and function. They observed the microscopic structure of bone as a tissue, with its macro structure in the skeleton. The types of bone were examined and fresh bone was compared to that in a preserved skeleton. In another, students showed good understanding of the biochemistry of food molecules, they tested different types of foods and recorded the different ways of assaying these molecules to determine food content.
108. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their AS course, but are achieving much as expected. They show good knowledge and understanding of microscopy, they observe and draw well. They understand the biochemistry of a range of key molecules – simple and complex carbohydrates, fats, and proteins. They can relate these to animal and plant cell structure. Students with special educational needs and those who are gifted and / or talent and students with English as an additional language make very good progress.
109. Teaching is very good overall, and students learn well as a result. The principal features of teaching are very clear objectives, focussed planning, brisk pace, and a range of methods and approaches to bring about learning. Teachers show good subject knowledge in their questioning and explanations and in the tasks they set. Each unit is very well specified with detailed learning objectives. Student self-assessment of learning is used and is matched by helpful and informative teacher marking. Students responded confidently to lesson activities, they listen and respond well. All the lessons seen were judged to be good or better. Much of the written work demanded of students in lessons takes the form of structured questions, this is linked

to essay assignments or investigations. Day-to-day marking is consistently detailed and of good quality.

110. Students learn well. They are attentive, work productively and respond well to the supportive teaching and different learning styles that they experience. Students support and help each other effectively and, in groups, talk and listen to each other maturely as part of their learning. Although many materials are used in support of learning, the use of ICT and linked study resources that offer an alternative to book-based study have not yet been used widely by students.
111. The independent work students undertake in the sixth-form learning centre is very well prepared, and tasks complement the content of lessons well. Students are confident in using books and ICT as presented in the networked laboratory. They approach this work maturely, and most are able to extract information and process data into spreadsheets and prepared tables for later analysis. The majority makes very good progress in lessons.
112. The good teaching and learning result from work in the subject being well led and managed. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improving standards. A new scheme of work effectively reflects the AS and A2 subject requirements, and sets the stage for good teaching. It identifies a range of approaches to encourage effective learning. A good range of helpful learning support materials is being developed. Target setting, based on careful analysis of students' performance in tests is well established, and targets are well focused on specific learning goals. These sit alongside students' self-assessments of progress. Students report they feel well supported by teacher feedback given and consequently progress is in most cases very good. The development of additional ICT linked resources will meet the needs of the lower ability range and raise attainment yet further.

## Chemistry

The overall quality of provision in Chemistry is **very good**. The post 16 retention rates are very good.

### Strengths

- Results show consistent improvement, and are above the national average.
- Students have a good grasp of concepts overall and across the ability range they are achieving well.
- Teaching is very good and sometimes excellent.
- The increasing use of ICT and data logging is assisting quantitative work such as kinetics.
- Written course materials are of very high quality and marking is diagnostic and helpful to students.
- The targets for students that stem from the monitoring of their performance are well focused on learning goals and use assessment information well.
- The subject is well led and a good range of materials, equipment and books are used.

### Areas for improvement

- Reconsider the number and deployment of lab technicians.

113. The GCE A/AS level examination results last summer were above average. Almost all students who took the examination gained a pass grade and the proportion gaining the highest grades, A and B, was above average. Very few students did not complete the course or have opted to repeat their AS year. In relation to their GCSE results students do very well. Results in 2001 follow a general trend of steady improvement over the last four years and can be linked in value added terms from the students 'previous results.
114. The standards of work of current students are also above average. In Year 13, students are achieving well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE results. In the lessons seen, they were doing well as a result of very effective teaching, which demanded much of them. The lesson structure and activities clearly focused their learning. In one lesson, the teacher offered feedback on completed written investigations that had required high levels of accuracy. Excellent teacher exposition was given that directed students to consider factors such as weighing by difference with a balance, possible sources of error and the need to measure to three significant figures. Students then proceeded to do a redox reaction, titrating sodium thiosulphate with potassium iodide by means of a starch indicator. The teacher set a time target and with all students understanding such practical routines, they set up apparatus quickly and skilfully. There are clearly planned phases to each lesson and the teacher monitors progress. Students with special educational needs and those who are gifted and / or talent and students with English as an additional language make very good progress.
115. Students in Year 12 receive bridging material over the summer period post-GCSE and there is an excellent induction handbook that supports the introductory AS unit. They show good knowledge and understanding of periodicity; they are adept at mole calculations. They were observed to investigate the effect of temperature on the rate of reaction between manganate (VII) ions and ethanedioate (oxalate) ions. All students had completed a minimum of three temperature determinations in a working double period lesson. Lesson time is used very productively.
116. Teaching is very good overall and students learn well as a result. The principal features of teaching are very clear objectives, sharp planning, brisk pace, and a range of methods and approaches to bring about learning. Teachers show good subject knowledge in their questioning and explanations, and in the tasks they set. Each unit is very well specified with detailed learning objectives and students' self-assessment of learning is used and is matched by helpful and informative teacher marking. Students respond confidently to lesson activities, they listen and respond well. All the lessons seen were judged as good or better, most were excellent.
117. Much of the written work demanded of students in lessons takes the form of structured questions, this is linked to essay assignments or investigations. Day-to-day marking is consistently detailed and of good quality. Students have access to Nuffield chemistry data books to which they frequently refer and there is a supporting small library of chemistry texts in each of the two laboratories for reference. Internet references are also often given. Students are attentive, work productively and respond well to the supportive teaching and different learning styles that they experience. Students support and help each other effectively and in groups, talk and listen to each other maturely as part of their learning.
118. The independent work students undertake complements the content of lessons very well. Students are confident in using books, advanced scientific calculators and also

ICT as presented in the networked laboratory. They approach their work maturely and most are able to extract information and process data into spreadsheets and prepared tables for later analysis. The majority makes very good progress in lessons. Many students take more than one science and they find the science presented is coherent across the three subjects. Each A level subject is team-taught by two teachers, who were seen to constantly cross-refer with each other's lessons. The science taught is therefore co-ordinated and very coherent to students.

119. The good teaching and learning result from work in the subject being well led and managed. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improving standards. A new scheme of work effectively reflects the AS and A2 subject requirement and sets the stage for good teaching. It identifies a range of approaches to encourage effective learning. A good range of helpful learning support materials is being developed. Target setting, based on careful analysis of students' performance in tests, is well established, and targets are well focused on specific learning goals. These sit alongside students' self-assessments of progress. Students report they feel well supported by the teacher feedback given and consequently progress is in most cases very good.
120. The key issue arising from the last inspection, which showed that teaching and learning standards were good but that science accommodation was limiting, has been fully met by the school's subsequent action plan. The school is considering a review of its resourcing science technician given that they are more laboratories and now greater use by the sixth form. The technicians were observed to provide very busy but high quality support. Currently the two science technicians cover 8 laboratories and this ratio exceeds that of the notional indicator (one technician to three laboratories).

## Physics

The overall provision is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Attainment at GCE A level is well above average.
- Students have a very positive attitude to the subject and work well together.
- Students make very good progress, benefiting in particular from teachers' very good subject knowledge.
- The very good teaching stimulates students and encourages them to learn independently.

### Areas for improvement

- Some equipment is in need of replacement.

121. The GCE A level results in 2000 were well above the national average, both in terms of the mean points score and the proportion of students gaining the higher grades A and B. At present there are no national figures with which to compare performance in 2001. The figures, however, suggest a slight dip, which may be attributed to difficulties, of a non-academic nature, experienced by one or two students. Over the last few years all students taking GCE A level have gained a pass grade. Standards have always been well above average and have risen at a rate greater than the national trend. Most students achieve very well in relation to earlier predictions and their GCSE results. There are no differences in either attainment or progress between students of different ethnic groups.

122. Students completed the first 'new style' AS examinations in 2001. Students achieved 48 per cent grade A, and 72 per cent grades A and B, a very good achievement. Unfortunately no national comparison figures are currently available. Nevertheless examination of workbooks for this group suggests that standards of attainment were well above average. The vast majority of these AS students are continuing into the A2 (upper sixth or Year 13) phase of the course.
123. Scrutiny of Year 12 and Year 13 students' workbooks, notes and practical files, together with direct observation during the inspection confirm that overall standards and achievement are well above average.
124. Students in Year 12 have just embarked on their AS course. They are very satisfied with the induction and pre-course information they have been given. They realise what is expected and fully recognise the intellectual demands made by the course. Some find parts of the subject difficult but accept the challenge. Year 12 students successfully interpret graphs of motion. Some experience difficulties with dimensional analysis but soon recover. Solutions to questions involving equations are clearly laid out and the background mathematical techniques present no problems. In a practical lesson involving the motion of trolleys, students set up and use the appropriate sensors to measure velocities and use information and communication technology to record and process their results.
125. Year 13 students take a great deal of care over their notes. Files containing notes are indexed and the notes arranged logically. The quality of note taking is good, and even photo-copied handouts are carefully annotated by individual students. Practical work is conscientiously and clearly written up. It is usually word-processed and every attempt is made to explain and analyse results. Students understand and use Newton's laws of motion, making the odd slip when negative quantities are encountered. In such cases useful written comments by the teacher remove this misunderstanding, as witnessed by subsequent pieces of work. Students in Year 13 have a secure knowledge of scientific principles, for example: in a lesson on types of spectra, they are able to apply their previous knowledge to explain the appearance of the different spectra they observe.
126. Sixth form students exhibit a high degree of research skills and independent working, for example: a Year 13 group are given the choice of several topics to research such as X-ray astronomy, the Hubble space telescope, Albert Einstein or ultra-violet astronomy. Students make a five-minute presentation on their chosen topic to the whole group. They use various sources such as textbooks, CD-ROMs and the Internet to make an original and interesting presentation. The whole group listens to the presentations with interest.
127. The quality of teaching is consistently very good. It is enthusiastic and sustains students' interest and enjoyment. They are constantly challenged to explain various physical phenomena, such as "Why does breaking a polo mint result in a greenish spark? ". Students thus become effective and independent learners. Teachers foster a spirit of enquiry and independent thought, born out of very good subject knowledge. They provide a climate in which students feel secure enough to take intellectual chances. As a result of such teaching, students feel sufficiently confident to give some quite thought-provoking views on elementary quantum theory. The quality of marking and feedback to students is very good. Students' experiment and work files are monitored on a regular basis and guidance given on how to improve. There is a great deal of mutual respect between teachers and students. Students co-operate



well in practical tasks involving working in small groups and are willing to listen to others' views.

128. The management of the department is very good. The team works well together and shares ideas. High standards are promoted and the department is committed to raising standards. Resources are satisfactory, but some equipment is at or just past its useful life and will very soon need to be replaced. Since the last inspection high standards of teaching and learning have been maintained and built upon.

## **Curricular Area 2: ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

### **Business**

#### **Business Education**

Overall, the quality of provision in sixth form business studies is **very good**. With better resources, provision could be excellent.

#### **Strengths**

- A level standards were high in 2001, and were above national averages in 2000. This represents good improvement from previous years.
- Results in the new AS examination were high in 2001 and were in line with the school average.
- Teaching is very good, lessons are very well planned to cover theory and its application in coursework projects.
- Computer equipment has been upgraded since the last inspection and is well used by students for business studies projects.
- Teachers have very good relationships with students and support them well.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Some weaker students would benefit from more frequent checks in lessons.
- The subject requires a permanent base with full availability of computers and material from business and industry in lessons in order to improve analytical and evaluation skills.

129. A level business studies consists of two parts – AS in Year 12 and A2 in Year 13. Students can choose to take just AS, or go on to complete the full A level. There are no economics courses at present. Business studies courses make use of the key skills of application of number, communications and ICT. Many, but not all, AS level students have taken GCSE business courses, where most results are at the highest grades of A\*/A and B.

130. The most recent results for business studies in 2001 have been high at AS and A level, both for the proportion of students receiving a pass grade (99 per cent at A level) and for those achieving the higher grades of A and B. (46 per cent at AS level and 42 per cent at A level). Students' average points scores in business studies were in line with the school's average AS and A level scores in 2001. This represents good improvement from 2000, where A level results were slightly below the national average for the top grades of A and B but the pass rate was 100 per cent. The point scores again were in line with students' results in other subjects. Results in the NDTEF/EDEXCEL syllabus have shown good improvement over the last five years relative to the AEB/AQA syllabus, which has now been dropped. Overall results compare well with other girls' selective schools.

131. The proportion of top grades of A and B have risen steadily over the last three years because of improved teaching techniques and more up-to-date computer equipment, which allows students to research the web for their coursework projects. This has been confirmed by their encouragingly high AS level grades last year in the new examination.
132. Work seen in lessons and in students' folders confirms the high standards. Achievement is good overall over time. In lessons seen, Year 12 AS level students develop good theoretical knowledge about the advantages and disadvantages of hierarchical business structures, and, in developing their analytical skills through class discussion, begin to relate the nature of business structures to corporate objectives. They become aware of the role of individuals' motivation to achieve business goals and link these aims with their personal responsibilities. Students learn how businesses behave in an oligopoly market, consolidating concepts many have studied at GCSE.
133. In evaluating their work for AS level last year, current Year 13 students confirm they have a good grounding for further study and, in the case of one student, for 'entering business later in life'. Students' folders show comprehensive, clearly-written notes, enhanced by a good level of numeracy shown in calculations of price elasticity and well-drawn graphs.
134. There is no evidence that computers have been used in lessons to model price changes in different markets. Students show a good knowledge of sampling techniques in market research, and how new businesses can forecast income and expenditure. Gearing ratios for a case study firm are well calculated. There is limited evidence of the use of topical material from local business and industry or Internet sources to enrich lessons, as most examples derive from textbooks.
135. In an excellent Year 13 lesson, students made rapid gains in understanding how an oligopoly can behave in a market, and they consolidated concepts learnt from textbooks through competing enthusiastically in a short business game that emulated the pressures of the business world. In discussing investment appraisal, students showed very good numeracy skills in calculating the NPV (net present value) of an investment, using formulae relating to time taken to recover its costs. They quickly and accurately evaluated whether investments were worthwhile.
136. In lessons, students show very good attitudes and considerable interest in business studies. They work well individually or in groups, for example when they play business games. They are also good at supporting each other in discussions about how they can evaluate their work. Most lessons involve note taking linked to general discussion, although there are opportunities for students to develop team work and communications key skills from time to time. Students use computers at home to extend individual coursework projects, as there are no computers available in lessons as the subject has no permanent base. Students can use computers in school outside lessons. Their very good results and attitude result from very good teaching.

137. Overall teaching and learning are very good and excellent in one of the six lessons seen. In lessons, teachers' excellent subject knowledge, based on experience in industry, ensured that the pace of theory lessons was fast, and that explanations of theory were well linked to practical examples. Teachers plan lessons very effectively, using a variety of approaches including note-taking, group discussion and business games. An oligopoly game in an excellent Year 12 lesson helped students analyse advantages and disadvantages of oligopolies in a free market through financial problem-solving exercises carried out in groups under business pressures. Teachers generally use examples well to challenge students, but their independent learning skills are limited because of the large amount of theory in the AS examination.
138. Students' notes show a good range of notes and diagrams, and well-marked tests and case studies show students how to improve. Students' work is marked promptly and constructively, and teachers' annotation of coursework projects for examination purposes is particularly detailed. Occasionally, the progress of weaker students in Year 12 who have been absent is not checked sufficiently in the lesson. Accommodation used for business studies provides insufficient computers or material from local business and industry to use in lessons.
139. Teachers help Year 13 students to be fully aware of their own strengths and weaknesses, as reflected in their previous year's AS level results. Work is monitored regularly, and targets discussed and reviewed termly with students.
140. Business studies is very well led and managed. A well-organised system of recording individual results for each module, comparing current standards with previous attainment, and calculating predicted grades, is very successful at monitoring individual students' progress over time. This has led to improved standards over the last three years. AS/A level business studies is a popular route from GCSE to higher education, and a large proportion of AS students go on to the full A level in the second year. Effective development planning has led to good improvements in teaching and examination standards since the last inspection. With the good achievement that takes place in Years 12 and 13 from previous knowledge and understanding, and the above average standards gained in examinations, the business studies department is well placed for further improvements.

### **Curricular Area 3: INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

#### **Computing**

Overall, the quality of provision in sixth form computing studies is **very good**.

#### **Strengths**

- A Level standards are high, being well above the school average in 2001. This represents very good progress by students, and very good improvement from the last inspection.
- Retention of students is very good overall.
- Teaching is very good, and often excellent, showing very good improvement from the last inspection.
- Students' personal development and relationship with the teacher are very good.
- Computer equipment has been upgraded since the last inspection and is well used by students to a high level of technical expertise.

#### **Areas for improvement**

- Continue to monitor closely and develop evaluation skills for weaker students.

141. Computing is available at AS and A2 level. The GCE course is made up of theory components and practical coursework projects at AS and A2 level. Students can choose to take just the AS level or go on to A2 and complete the A level. About a half of all AS students tend to go on to the second year.
142. Students' average points scores in computing in 2000 were above the national average, and in line with students' results in other school subjects. The most recent A level results for computing in 2001 have been very high, and well above the school averages both for the proportion of students receiving a pass grade (91 per cent) and for those achieving the higher grades of A or B. (18 per cent). Results in the new AS examination were also high, with 20 per cent achieving the higher grades A or B, and 100 per cent achieving grades A –E. Results were in line with other school subjects.
143. Results are now significantly better than they were at the time of the last inspection, with the proportion of top grades of A and B rising steadily due to improved teaching techniques and the use of more up-to-date equipment. Grades have improved considerably each year over the last three years. Not all A level students have taken GCSE in information and communication technology (ICT) as it was an option but it is now compulsory. Although, the majority of those studying computing will have done the GCSE. In addition, most students have also attained the lower-level CLAIT examinations. Overall students' achievement is very high from where they start. Current students in Year 13 are expected to achieve highly. This has been confirmed by their encouraging AS level grades last year, which reflect very good progress in a short time.
144. The work of students seen in ICT lessons, and in their coursework notes and projects, confirms the high standards and very good progress over time. Students are very well motivated. In lessons seen, Year 12 AS level students develop good theoretical knowledge. They describe iteration and successfully experiment with loops. Their very good notes on components of computer systems include clearly-labelled diagrams and a detailed flow chart of the five-stage model. They consolidate good numeracy skills by converting between binary, decimal and octal notation, and produce effective spreadsheets to create a binary/decimal converter.
145. Last year's Year 13 students' A level coursework projects were generally well presented. The highest-attaining student used Access effectively to create a database system for a local hospital. The system enabled users to search for many different aspects relating to patients' clinical trials. Her system design and testing were very comprehensive, as was her user manual, which clearly showed the proficient use of well-developed macros. The weakest project about a garden design centre still met average standards, although evaluation was relatively superficial.
146. Examining board reports confirm the high standards gained by students with the minimum of help from the teacher, and students develop very good links with the real users who require changes to their systems. Regular visits to the organisations develop students' key communication skills, and the skills of team working, particularly with people who are new to them. Numeracy skills are developed to an advanced level through students' exploration of Turbo Pascal programming routines and algorithms.
147. Year 13 students in several other subjects make particularly good use of advanced ICT applications. Students in A level business studies develop templates to model cash flow forecasting, and science students use Log-It well to record and analyse temperatures and changes in light. Students on the Key Skills course are preparing for

more advanced ICT work with a more basic course to bridge the gap from their previous GCSE courses.

148. All students seen in lessons show very good interest in the subject, and work hard in lessons. They show excellent concentration and the capacity to work independently on their practical tasks, but the majority are good at supporting each other in discussions about how they can improve and evaluate their design work for programs. No student reported any difficulty in gaining access to the resources they need in school. Students' fine results and very good overall attitude are the product of very good teaching, and increasing standards reflect very good achievement in students' work by the end of Year 9, and in GCSE. Students of all levels of attainment are well aware of their current progress in terms of programming knowledge and skills, and of their future objectives in higher education.
149. Overall teaching and learning is very good, and excellent in a half of the small sample of lessons seen, where the teacher's excellent subject knowledge, based on experience as an engineer in industry, ensured that the pace of theory lessons was rapid. Theory was well linked to practical examples from the teacher's own experience and this enlivened topics that weaker students find it initially difficult to conceptualise. Topical examples helped keep the interest of Year 12 students, all of whom had no previous experience of the subject. In introducing executable statements in programming code, the teacher was careful to ensure students were fully aware of the reasons why code needs to be written accurately. As students take time to absorb difficult new concepts, they consolidated understanding of theory very well through practising short programs they had written. Some weaker students had not fully met homework requirements, and made less progress than others.
150. In the Year 13 lesson seen, students learnt rapidly to consolidate knowledge and skills by applying spreadsheets skills to an insurance business by setting up a number of macros to underpin user menus relating to quotes for different types of customer. Through very good individual teacher support where required, and a closely-structured series of short, clear tasks, students rapidly developed a good ability to customise Excel for a user. This provided very effective preparation for their coursework projects.
151. Examples seen from previous Year 13 students reflected very good teaching, characterised by the students' well-organised, indexed projects, and accurate, constructive marking, very well geared to examination requirements. Current Year 13 students are well aware of their own strengths and weaknesses. With the help of well-targeted teacher monitoring, students have worked steadily to improve weaknesses in evaluation skills.
152. Computing is very well led and managed, and provision for Key Skills work is well organised. High quality systems to record individual students' results for each module, comparing current standards with previous attainment, and calculating predicted grades, are very successful at monitoring individual students' progress over time and identifying underachievement. This has led to improved standards over the last three years, as additional new computer equipment has come into the school. Computing is a popular AS subject. With the very good achievement made by students in Years 12 and 13, and resulting high standards, the computing department is well placed to improve further.

## Curricular Area 4: VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

### Art and design

The provision for art and design is **very good**. Students may follow courses at AS/A level. They undertake research, personal investigations and controlled assignments using a wide range of media. Retention rates are very good.

#### Strengths

- Results are well above the national average.
- Some of the work seen, particularly preparatory work is exceptional.
- Very good teaching and learning.

#### Areas for improvement

- Accommodation is tight and storage of resources and work is increasingly difficult.

153. The GCE A level and AS level results in 2000 were well above the national average and those for similar schools. With all students passing and with 67 per cent of students achieving A to B grades at AS level, results were above average. The average point score was above the national average and those for similar schools. The latest 2001 school results at A and AS level indicate again a 100 per cent pass rate. Over twelve students gained A\*/A grades. All students who start the course take the examination and retention is very good. Many students go on to art school and foundation based courses.
154. Attainment in lessons is well above average with some outstanding work in preparatory and independent studies. Work seen during the inspection shows that students successfully build on their skills from GCSE. They consolidate and acquire new skills. Particularly strong are their research based studies and their recording analysis of their ideas. Students are articulate and express themselves proficiently. Observational and recording skills are often of a high standard. Their knowledge of artists from different periods, traditions and cultures is very good. They are secure when exploring newly learned skills and techniques and use a wide range of media. Independent studies are a strength. Critical commentaries indicate sensitive and responsive views and approaches. Work is creative, imaginative and interesting. Some of the work on display around the school and in portfolios is exemplary.
155. In the Year 12 lessons observed attainment was very good. Students explored media and interpreted ideas based on a holiday project. These ranged from studies of human form influenced by Francis Bacon, comparative landscape studies from Iceland and Suffolk, representational studies of natural forms into abstract form, sculpture studies influenced by Leger, and abstract forms derived from architectural studies in Sydney. All students showed clear evidence of in-depth research use of ICT, text and other sources of first hand evidence.
156. In the Year 13 lessons observed, attainment was very good. Students focused on their independent studies. Many are already quite accomplished artists. Students are very clearly focused about course criteria requirements. Many chose to study twentieth century artists and in discussion they demonstrated a sound knowledge of the work of Gilbert and George, Georgia O'Keefe and some of the more recent works in the Tate Modern Gallery. Much of the work is of a high level in terms of competence in drawing, painting and three-dimension.

157. Students' views of the subject are very positive. They stated that they enjoyed the independence given to them. They have a mature approach to their work and they absorb ideas and information quickly. In discussion, students demonstrated very good levels of interest, knowledge and critical appreciation of the work of different artists. They are well motivated and enjoy their art lessons.
158. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and their enthusiasm is shared with the students. They have high expectations and students respond well to this. Literacy and key skills are well developed and are also reinforced well by teaching. Lesson planning is detailed and comprehensive. Very good on-going dialogue was observed between teachers and students, sharing ideas and approaches to improve the quality of work. Particularly good is the assessment and tutoring of individual students. This gives them very clear guidance for future improvement. Students make very good progress because of the demands of the teaching and the guidance offered.
159. The head of department is clear about the strengths of the department and continues to maintain high standards. The quality of leadership and management is very good. The curriculum and schemes of work are good with clear learning objectives closely matched to examination requirements. Opportunities for extra-curricular activities and visits to galleries and art events are good. Assessments and individual tutoring are useful, informative and accurate. Students said how useful they found this. Resources, including information and communication technology, are well maintained and well used. The accommodation is cramped for students, and storage of resources and work, particularly large-scale, can be difficult. Space is at a premium. The work on display throughout the school most successfully celebrates the students' achievements, and art deservedly has a high profile in the school.

## Theatre studies

Overall, the quality of provision in theatre studies is **very good**. Students follow the AS course in theatre and drama studies. This involves devised performances based on curriculum content, different approaches to selected texts and a range of practical and theatrical studies of selected plays. Retention rates are very good.

### Strengths

- The standards achieved are high.
- Excellent teaching and learning.

### Areas for improvement

- No areas for improvement arising from weaknesses can be detected.

160. The GCE A and AS level results in 2000 were very good, with 50 per cent of students achieving A\*- A /B grades, and eight of these achieving A\* grades. The average point score was well above the national average and those of similar schools. Results reflect improvement over recent years, although the latest year had a slight hiccup with some lower grades. The school has sent for these papers to try and check why the students achieved low marks. The school has applied for assessment. All students passed and results in AS showed that all students achieved the higher levels. Students achieve very well in relation to their attainment on entry to the course and their progress is very good. All students who start the course take the examination.

161. Attainment in lessons is well above average. Students' practical work is enhanced by their theoretical knowledge and understanding of theatre practices from different periods. Written work indicates that students can explain the greater depths of production and the involvement of the various productions. They show a good understanding of the social, cultural and political contexts of theatre. In devised performance they adjust well in role and give convincing portrayals, for example in 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. They were adept at exploring a variety of textual studies bringing to the practical application originality and humour. They were not afraid to explore the emotional and psychological details of characterisation. Students acquired new skills and consolidated previously learned disciplines. Particular strengths are evident in the co-operation, teamwork and management of one another. Key skills are developing well. Written work is well presented, and shows very good use of literacy and ICT skills. Work shows in depth enquiries and secure evidence of analysing and understanding texts. Students evaluate their own and other students' work in a positive and constructive manner.
162. In Year 12 lessons observed, attainment was very good. Students were very confident and sharpened their skills in voice and stage direction, use of props and lighting. They recognised the rhythmic language used in the text of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' and applied this in role. Monologues and conversations between Demetrius, Bottom, Puck and Snout were all well delivered and with humour. With the teacher prompting, they accurately described the differences and inferences between the Fairy and Mortal kingdoms.
163. In a Year 13 lesson students explored 'Our Country's Good'. They had previously read and knew aspects of the play. During rehearsals they discussed the various skills learned and prepared for an assessed performance. It was quickly evident that students were aware of the mood, tension and pace of the scenes performed. They were able to convey the moral crisis of the characters who were being affected by death and mental breakdown. Their evaluations of the play were well focused. They successfully created a montage scene and developed various skills and techniques effectively. Through their work they show an increasing understanding of the playwright's intentions, the actor-audience relationship and the use of space and production style. Students challenged each other well and built on their skills and techniques to improve their performance.
164. In discussion students demonstrated their knowledge and enjoyment of the subject. They also belong to local theatre groups and as part of the course regularly attend the theatre. Students run a drama club for younger pupils.
165. Students learn at a fast rate and very well; they are mature and responsive. They are clear about work in progress and interact well with each other. They are articulate and perceptive. They are quite able to deconstruct and explore texts practically. The quality of teaching is excellent. Teachers are secure in their knowledge of the theory and practice of selected theatre practitioners. Lesson planning is excellent, detailed and has a wide range of ideas and extension work provided. Delivery is brisk effective and stimulating. Expectations of what the students know and are capable of are high with a good level of challenge. The teachers' adept focus, knowledge and interpretation of the texts used, enabled students to achieve very high standards. Mutual respect is a strong feature in lessons. Teaching is sensitive to students' views. It is well focussed and explores with students the social, political and emotional factors that are inherent in their work. Lessons are challenging and demanding but enjoyable. Relationships are excellent.



166. The head of department is also the only theatre studies teacher. He is clear about the strengths of the students and what they can achieve. The subject is increasingly popular amongst students. The curriculum and schemes of work are carefully devised with clear learning objectives and assessment opportunities that match course requirements. The teacher assessment is informative, detailed and accurate. There are very good opportunities for extra-curricular activities, such as drama club, productions and theatre visits. Students are fully involved in this process. Resources are appropriate and gradually texts and props are being increased. The accommodation, although good, can at times be quite confined. Good use is also made of alternative and local facilities. Theatre studies and school productions are popular and the department has a high profile in the school and local community.

## Curricular Area 5: HUMANITIES

### Geography

The provision for geography in the sixth form is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Standards are improving at A level. The department met its target, within the school, of 50 per cent of students achieving A/B grades.
- Teachers have a good command of the subject and they question students well encouraging deeper thought and a greater understanding of the subject.
- ICT and other resources are available for students to research topics.
- Students' attitudes to the subject create a good working environment and contribute to lively in depth-discussions about the subject.

#### Areas for improvement

- Results achieved at AS level. Retention of students from the AS to the A2 course.
- Retention of students from GCSE into sixth form geography course.
- The planned use of ICT as a tool to assist in data handling, in particular the use of mathematical modelling using spreadsheets.

167. Standards have risen recently with 50 per cent of students achieving either A or B grades and 92 per cent achieving either grades A, B or C at A level. This is above expectations for all schools and in line with expectations for grammar schools. Students perform at least as well in geography at A level as they do in their other subjects. Standards at A level were lower than this in 2001. Forty per cent achieved a pass at grades A-B at AS level, 57 per cent at grades A -C and 93 per cent at A-E. This was a much larger cohort than the A level groups of recent years, 30 students instead of the 14 or 15 studying A level. Only thirteen students have continued to study the subject to A2. These are all students who achieved at least a grade D pass. The school has already taken steps designed to improve results, reducing the number of teachers teaching the course and increasing the time spent on residential field study.

168. Students' work observed in lessons and elsewhere indicated that standards at AS are increasing and at A level are at least being maintained. Standards are well above average. Students' coursework shows an in-depth knowledge of human and physical processes and the extent to which one process may impinge on another. Findings are properly explained and suitable conclusions are drawn. Maps and diagrams that accompany the work are carefully drawn and the significance of each is explained. The fieldwork has been completed and evidence is used to good effect. Year 13 students were seen researching data on population growth effectively using both textbook sources and the Internet. They presented reasoned arguments as to the causes of population growth and which causes could be most effectively targeted to reduce growth and conserve resources. They also showed good consideration and understanding of the ethics of imposing moral standards on other societies. Although the AS course has only been running for less than half a term, the Year 12 students have already made good progress from the GCSE. This is due in part to the efforts put into the development of communication skills: note-taking, essay writing and writing for different purposes. Their number skills are also being developed. Students were observed learning to use log graph paper to compare stream morphology data to help develop hypotheses for testing. They were seen developing abilities to identify and link the features of flood hydrographs to rivers with different geographical locations.
169. Teaching is consistently good and is a key factor in raising and maintaining standards. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and use this to guide their students' thoughts and ensure they consider all aspects when discussing issues. For example when Year 13 were researching and presenting information about the advantages and disadvantages of different methods of controlling population growth, students were giving reasoned arguments supporting one method and against others with a minimum of teacher intervention by the end of a lesson. Teachers encourage the use of ICT to research topics, and students used the Internet, visiting sites given by the teacher to find information to support their arguments.
170. Teachers help reinforce and develop map-reading skills. Where teaching is very good, teachers ensure students have the opportunity to apply newly developed skills to a practical situation. In a Year 12 class the teacher gave feedback and praise to students for their answers when identifying hydrographs and relating them to locations. This ensured accuracy and encouraged students to deeper thought and more understanding, and better identification of features on maps. The teacher had high expectations to questions linking the geographical features of the river to flood hydrographs.
171. Students are very positive about the school and the department. They speak highly of the opportunities given to develop their writing and number skills in lessons. They are given good access for research and good guidance. This takes the form of shared mark schemes, information on how to research and time to critically assess their own work.
172. There has been improvement since the last inspection. Teaching has improved and was seen to have a good impact on learning in all lessons, and a very good impact in 40 per cent of lessons seen. Information and communication technology (ICT) facilities are now available within the department.

173. The department is well led and managed. The head of department gives clear direction. Teaching is observed as part of performance management and targets are set for individual and department performance. Results are analysed and data collected informs decisions taken. Following the A/S results, changes were made to the number of teachers teaching the Year 12 course and an extra day has been added to the field study courses. The department now uses best expertise to teach the VI form courses.

## History

The provision in the sixth form is **good**.

### Strengths

- Student achievement is very good overall.
- The quality and effectiveness of teaching are very good.
- Lessons are very carefully structured and are well tailored to the needs of the students.
- Students are acquiring a very solid body of knowledge. They grasp concepts very well and apply them to the subject very effectively.
- Learning resources for the new course are being built up and there is a dedicated ICT suite.

### Areas for improvement

- Improvements in record keeping will enhance support to all students and ensure that a wide range of ability can be catered for.
- Continued effective monitoring of the management of the department will promote its performance.

174. The overall GCE A level examination results continue to be above the national average. Students' performance in history relative to their performance in other subjects has shown continued improvement. The recent decline in the proportion of students obtaining the highest grades, A and B, was reversed this summer. The subject was not taught to Year 12 students during the academic year 2000-2001, as a result of the accelerating fall in the number of students opting for history. There were therefore no candidates for GCE A/S level in 2001 and so no history is currently taught in Year 13.

175. Very high standards of work are achieved by the current Year 12. The transition from GCSE is being managed effectively. Students are already working successfully from a variety of sources. Work folders are full and up-to-date, matching the high levels of attainment achieved in the classroom. A number of folders already show evidence of re-drafting. Students work purposefully, whether individually, in group work or presentation, and remain on task throughout the lesson. The majority of students are already beginning to take responsibility for their own work. They undertake private study very effectively and respond very well to questions from their teachers, with whom there is a very harmonious and productive working relationship. There are as yet few signs of students taking the initiative by developing their own lines of argument and testing them against their teachers, but at the present stage in their studies it is appropriate that the lead comes from their teachers. All students are challenged to reach their highest level of attainment, and are doing so.

176. Management of students' learning is good but remains very much at the direction of the teacher and allows insufficient scope for independent learning. Students are not necessarily encouraged, for example, to predict possible outcomes of events.

Support for students includes advice about the work to be undertaken, about reading and about other resources available, such as history Internet sites.

177. The classroom teaching is very good. Very different teaching styles are apparent but they share common features. Lessons are carefully planned and delivered. Although the range of strategies employed is limited, the teaching is effective. It is patient and good-humoured. A good pace is maintained. The main focus is on extending the knowledge and understanding of each student. Opportunities to exploit the approach to history demanded by the examination are sometimes ignored. Teachers' scrutiny of students' work files is not consistent across the department and some errors are being missed.
178. All the teaching is by subject specialists. The teachers are enthusiastic, experienced and well qualified. Teaching accommodation is satisfactory, and some has recently been refurbished to create an attractive environment. Wall displays are satisfactory. A small departmental stockroom has been created since the last inspection but there is no departmental office. Students have access to the departmental computer suite but make insufficient use of it. Resources have otherwise tended to be concentrated on Key Stage 3 and 4. Exploitation of the potential offered by computers for teaching, record-keeping etc, has been slow.
179. The major issue facing the department since the previous inspection has been its failure to attract students, particularly those more likely to obtain modest grades. Despite continued success in history at GCSE, the number of students recruited to A-level fell annually until the subject disappeared from the timetable. The school had identified this as a concern. Action by senior management, with a package of measures to revitalise and market the subject and which included a syllabus change, has rescued sixth form history from extinction. Student numbers are now healthy.
180. Management is satisfactory. There is a commitment to improving standards and implementing the recommendations made in the previous inspection report, particularly with regard to target-setting and record keeping. More is required in terms of sharing good practice between teachers. Students speak well of the subject. Their needs could be identified more precisely by better record keeping and use of national and school data.

## Sociology

Overall, the quality of provision in sociology is **very good**

### Strengths

- The subject is growing in popularity.
- Examination results represent good 'added value' for students at all levels of performance.
- Students learn well as a result of very good teaching.

### Areas for improvement

- As the subject grows in popularity the department should develop a systematic approach to sharing ideas and good practice.

181. The most recent GCSE A level examination results were broadly in line with the national average for girls. The percentage of students achieving A to B grades at 30 per cent was in line with the national average. Within these results, all levels of performance are represented. The 2001 results were an improvement over the

examination results in recent years where the average performance has been slightly below that of girls nationally. Twelve students took AS. Sociology is an increasingly popular subject in the school with 28 students following an AS level course and 15 students following a full A level course in Year 13. Sociology is not taught at GCSE and attracts students with a range of academic potential. Examination results are very creditable for students at all levels of performance. They represent good achievement when they are compared to the performance of the same students in their other subjects and demonstrate good 'added value' from the students' different starting points at the beginning of Year 12.

182. The standards of work of current students are good at this stage. Year 13 students did very well in their AS examinations with results that were above the national average. Their work in Year 13 continues to be of a high standard. For example, some excellent work was seen on the sociology of education, including an analysis of the reasons for the varying performance of students from different social and ethnic backgrounds. This high level of understanding and good progress is a result of good attitudes to the subject and good teaching.
183. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course, but early signs are that they are gaining a wide knowledge of sociological theories and methodology. They have adapted well to the demands of a new subject and to the different ways of working in the sixth form. The teachers have been particularly effective in developing the students' independent working skills. In one very good lesson, students were introduced to the structure and methodology involved in creating an evaluative report and asked to select and plan research studies. As a result of the teacher's informative presentation and supplementary questioning, which was both supportive and challenging, they did this with confidence and presented impressive proposals.
184. Teaching is very good overall. Teachers show very good subject knowledge and demonstrate their enthusiasm for, and commitment to, sociology. At best, very good questioning structures discussion and open supplementary questions provide fresh challenges. On one occasion, a lack of clarity about objectives and intended outcomes led to discussion, which was dutiful rather than engaged, but good relationships and skilled intervention with different groups overcome this. Assessment is well developed, the students are clear about where they are, their individual targets and what they have to do to achieve them.
185. Students learn very well. They are attentive and respond well to the good teaching. Class and group discussions are not always as good as they could be. Students' folders are well organised and show well-developed study skills. They make good use of information and communication technology to access recent research, analyse data and organise their work.
186. The very good teaching and learning results from the subject being well managed. A well-planned programme of lessons supported by high quality resources covers all examination requirements. In the past, one member of staff has taught the subject. As sociology expands and includes more teachers and teaching groups, the school will wish to consider a more systematic approach to sharing of ideas and good practice.

## Psychology

Overall, the quality of provision in psychology is **very good**.

### Strengths

- In most years, examination results are well above the national average and this represents very good 'added value' from the start of Year 12.
- Teaching is very good.
- Students respond well, in the classroom and in their independent work, to the high standard of teaching.

### Areas for improvement

- The subject could be enriched by greater use of outside professionals and visits.

187. In most years, A level examination results in psychology have been well above the national average. All students entered for the examination have reached at least a pass grade and usually three-quarters or more have passed at Grade C or better. In 2001, there was a drop in performance, with results that were in line with the national average. However, this particular group did at least as well in psychology as in their other subjects. Psychology is a new subject in the sixth form, as it is not taught at GCSE. In relation to their general standards at GCSE, students have consistently done better in psychology than might have been predicted. The 'value added' from the start of Year 12 has been very good. In recent years, very few students have not completed the course.

188. Psychology at A level, and particularly at AS level is an increasingly popular subject. There are 58 students following an AS level course in Years 12 or 13, with 12 completing a full A level in Year 13.

189. The standards of work of current students are very good. Year 13 students taking the course leading to a full A level did very well in their AS level examinations, with results that were well above the national average. In the few lessons seen in the inspection week, they were making very good progress as a result of very good teaching. The best work in the folders reviewed during the inspection week was of an exceptionally high standard. Students in Year 12 and Year 13 already show signs that their achievement is also very good. They show good knowledge and understanding of the units that they are studying. They are adapting well to the demands of a new subject and, in the case of Year 12, to the different ways of working in the sixth form.

190. Teaching is very good overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. Their enthusiasm for, and commitment to psychology, is demonstrated in lessons that are interesting and varied. The nature of the subject means that they have a very good understanding of how students learn and this is reflected in a good repertoire of appropriate teaching strategies. A well-planned programme of lessons meets syllabus requirements and provides a good balance between different elements of the subject and different ways of working. Assessment is well developed. Students are clear about where they are, their individual targets, and what they have to do to achieve them. The teachers have been particularly effective in developing the students' skills in independent working.

191. Students learn very well. They are attentive and respond well to the high standards of teaching. In the few lessons observed, they were sometimes reluctant to contribute at first, particularly those in Year 12, but skilful questioning and intervention from the teachers drew them out and lively discussions resulted. They collaborate well. In one

lesson, groups of students had researched and prepared presentations on two psychology case studies. These presentations were given with great maturity, skill and humour. In independent work, students show good general research skills in, for example, scanning, interpreting and summarising text. They also show a high level of understanding of subject-specific methods of enquiry through, for example, their evaluation of the ethical factors involved in different psychological studies. Where appropriate, they make good use of ICT.

192. The very good teaching and learning results from the subject being well led and managed. A sound scheme of work provides the framework for teaching. Commercial and teacher prepared learning support materials are appropriate, well organised and accessible. The teacher in charge of the subject has recognised that the subject can be further enriched by the greater use of outside professionals and visits.

## Curricular Area 6: ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

### English

The quality of provision in English literature is **very good**.

#### Strengths

- The very high achievement of students and their positive attitudes.
- The strong development of independent learning.
- Structured resources and support for teaching.
- Good teaching, that is well paced, with a variety of tasks building to clear purpose.

#### Areas for improvement

- When appropriate, widen the curriculum offered to students.
- Further developing shared resources for teaching.

193. The department this year offers English literature AS and A level. There are 33 students in two Year 13 groups and 44 in three Year 12 groups. Last year the department also offered English A level. However, a decision was made to concentrate resources for 2001-2 on one examination, English Literature. This was felt to be the most appropriate for the school's students.
194. Standards in English are very high. For 2000, the latest year for which national comparisons are available, results for both English language and English Literature A level were well above the national average. While English Literature results have been very high over the past three years, for English this was an improvement. In both subjects, students performed better than in their other subjects for the last three years for which figures are available (1998-2000). In 2001, achievement in English Literature was very good, 75 per cent of students achieved A or B grades. English results were slightly above the national average, with 9 out of 24 (38 per cent) obtaining the top two grades.
195. Evidence in the majority of Year 13 students' folders is of high-quality writing and understanding. The work on texts is extremely conscientious, shaped by teacher and students to lead to coursework or essays, which are logically argued, often with excellent reference to texts and to literary concepts. In class discussion, many students confidently communicate complex ideas supported by a detailed knowledge of their texts and a wide range of reference. In Year 13 they use their knowledge of form, style and texts to analyse very effectively and respond to what they read. In Year 12, students are developing their awareness of literary form and language, often showing very good analysis of unseen texts.

196. The quality of teaching is generally good and never less than satisfactory. Learning is very good overall, and never less than satisfactory. Teachers show a good knowledge of subject, texts and concepts, and lessons had a good choice of activities to develop and reinforce learning. An example was work in a Year 12 class which began with students analysing each other's sonnets, written for homework; this developed an increased understanding of poetic form (and art in general) and was then led back by the teacher to inform their understanding of their set text.
197. Tasks and activities in lessons and for homework demand detailed responses to text and the students provide it. They are designed to encourage involvement and individual response, and build up students' detailed knowledge of content and style. Similarly, more extended written tasks develop students' ability to demonstrate their understanding in well-constructed, thoughtful and insightful essays. Lessons are generally well paced, with a variety of tasks building to clear purpose. There is also considerable evidence of students as independent learners. They confidently use the Internet for research, they work independently on texts producing extended and very helpful notes, and at times direct their own learning appropriately, following guidance from staff.
198. A strength of the department is the very positive attitudes which students have to the school and their very good relationships with staff and with one another. As a result, both in class discussion and in word-processed extended writing, students were unusually comfortable with exploring ideas and risking being wrong, which enables them to learn faster as they work towards higher levels of understanding and communication.
199. Assessment is generally thorough and helpful. The department uses clear criteria by which students can see after major pieces of work both where they are in terms of A Level grade and what they need to improve on. Students understand the system and respond to it very favourably. The department measures its own impact on students through results, quality of work, degree of progress and student satisfaction.
200. The department is well managed. A current strength of the department, following decisions taken by the head of faculty, is that teachers of A Level have been supported during the change to a new examination system by a simplification of examinations (dropping English A level to concentrate on English Literature) and options. All students now follow more or less the same course. This has allowed the head of faculty to produce clear guidelines for work on each text, and common background reading. Teachers (and students) have added to these with a range of very good resources. This decision has necessarily reduced the range of the English curriculum. The head of faculty has also introduced an effective system of pinpointing students' strengths and areas for development through use of the examination criteria; students find this useful. Resources are well organised and systems of communication for shared classes are clear. In the last inspection there were no issues for the department relating to the sixth form, and its strengths remain broadly similar.



## Modern Foreign Languages

The focus of the inspection was on Spanish. French, German and Russian are also taught at A level but these languages were not sampled. More students have recently chosen to take Spanish than in previous years although French and German are usually more popular.

### Spanish

Overall, the quality of provision is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Teaching is good. Lessons are well planned and detailed.
- A high proportion of Spanish is spoken by teachers and students.
- Students' oral work is usually fluent and accurate.
- Students maintain concentration for long periods of time.

#### Areas for improvement

- Provide a greater range of interesting and enjoyable classroom activities.
- Engage passive students in order to match the enthusiastic attitudes of some students.

201. Up to 2001, GCE A level group sizes in Spanish have been small. No accurate national comparisons in relation to pass rates are therefore possible. In 2001 there has been a significant increase in the number of students taking the A level examination. Results are above average with all except one student achieving a pass grade. In Year 12, students' results at AS level in 2001 are mostly good with the majority achieving higher level grades.
202. The standard of work of students now in Year 13 is above average. Most have made good progress, building well on their attainment at GCSE. Well-planned teaching results in balanced achievement in the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. Higher-attaining students, for example, listen to extracts from up-to-date sources such as Spanish radio, spoken at native speed. They have a good understanding of the detail of items on current events and contemporary issues in the news. Virtually all Spanish lessons are conducted in Spanish by the teacher who is a confident and fluent speaker. This means that students have a clear expectation that they must listen carefully if they are to understand the content of the lesson. All of them do, and this helps them gain further confidence in following instructions and information.
203. In speaking, most students in their second year of A level express their views on a range of topics with good accuracy and pronunciation. Carefully planned written support by the teacher enables students to talk at length on themes such as racism, prejudice, and the role of men and women; most are able to express their personal views and opinions with some confidence.
204. Students achieve well in developing their reading comprehension skills. They understand longer texts, match correct summaries in Spanish with paragraphs from written articles in the textbook. They comprehend most of an article about life in Madrid, matching key words and sentences. The majority of students have developed good written skills. From the beginning of Year 12 into Year 13 they progress from letter writing on personal topics to lengthier and more abstract themes such as Spanish culture and history. They write at good length about environmental issues

such as the problem of traffic in towns, having acquired a wider range of phrases and new words. In writing about their literature texts they produce accurate biographies or descriptions of the authors they study.

205. The attainment of a small number of students is below average. These students make their best progress in acquiring new vocabulary and language content but lack confidence in oral work. In a Year 12 class studying the topic of homes and homelessness, some are reluctant to volunteer spoken answers without prompts from the teacher and written support. Some basic errors in relation to the correct choice of verb in Spanish continue to be made in both Years 12 and 13.
206. Teaching is good overall and has many strong features. Relationships are positive and supportive. Objectives are clear and planning revises and builds on previous work. All this results in students maintaining good levels of concentration and effort throughout double lessons. Prompting, rephrasing, recapitulation and support for individuals, results in students of different levels of ability being fully included in all parts of the lesson. A particular strength in lessons is the use of Spanish by the teacher with the expectation that students will do the same. Independent learning is encouraged by the regular use of dictionaries in class. Teaching uses a range of different activities but sometimes these are not particularly interesting. A greater variety, using media such as television and song, for example, would involve students more actively. This would encourage them to be less passive—particularly lower attaining students—and to become more enthusiastic learners. In Year 12 homework is regularly set and carefully marked. Detailed guidance is given in comments by the teacher to help students improve their work. At the time of the inspection Year 13 were working on coursework so less formal homework has been set this term.