

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **SUTTON GRAMMAR SCHOOL FOR BOYS**

Sutton

LEA area: Sutton

Unique reference number: 103011

Headteacher: Mr G Ironside

Reporting inspector: Mr M Milton  
1723

Dates of inspection: 16<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> October 2000

Inspection number: 223973

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar (selective)
School category:	Foundation
Age range of students:	11-18 years
Gender of students:	Boys
School address:	Manor Lane Sutton Surrey
Postcode:	SM1 4AS
Telephone number:	020 8642 3821
Fax number:	020 8770 9070
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr C Townsend
Date of previous inspection:	12 <sup>th</sup> February 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
M Milton OIN 1723	Registered inspector	Geography	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? How well are students taught? What should the school do to improve further?
J O'Keefe OIN 19798	Lay inspector		Partnership with parents; Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
S McConville OIN 24142	Team inspector	English	
J Paddick OIN 10308	Team inspector	Mathematics	
P Fyans OIN 29742	Team inspector	Science	Equality of opportunity
P Curtis OIN 10817	Team inspector	Design and technology	
G Rayner OIN 10817	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources; Sixth form
R Coulthard OIN 11746	Team inspector	Music, Religious education	How well is the school led and managed?
R Fox OIN 4617	Team inspector	French, German	English as an additional language
G Marriott OIN 3674	Team inspector	History, Economics, Business studies	Special educational needs; Sixth form
J Challands OIN 22042	Team inspector	Physical education	How well does the school care for its students?
R Allison-Smith OIN 2051	Team inspector	Art	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to the students?

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

The school has 791 boys, including 201 in the sixth form. This is about average for a grammar school. About one-quarter of the students are from ethnic minority groups. The percentage of students known to be eligible for free school meals is below average for grammar schools. The percentage of students speaking English as an additional language is high but almost all of these students are very competent English speakers. The percentage of students on the school's register for special educational needs is well below average. The needs of these students include learning difficulties, sensory impairment and medical matters. Students' attainment on entry is well above average, as the school draws its students from the top 25% of the attainment range, which is wider than some other nearby grammar schools.

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

The school is successful because standards are above average for grammar schools as a result of good teaching. The students' attitudes to work and their behaviour are excellent. The leadership of the school has secured high expectations and a very good school ethos. The school's expenditure per student is well below average and, consequently, the school gives good value for money.

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

- Students' behaviour and attitudes to work are excellent.
- Teaching was good or better in just over three-quarters of the lessons seen.
- Teachers know students very well, and provide very good opportunities for their personal development.
- Standards are high in many subjects, especially in English, mathematics and science.
- Very many students are involved in competitive sports, the Combined Cadet Force and other extracurricular activities.
- The very good work-related curriculum prepares older students very effectively for higher education and adult life.

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

- The monitoring and support of teaching, as the quality of teaching in 18% of lessons did not enable students to make the best possible progress.
- The use of computers as, during Key Stages 3 and 4, subjects do not use them enough to enable students to apply and improve their information and communication technology (ICT) skills.
- The Key Stage 4 curriculum, as not all students study a design and technology subject as required by the National Curriculum.
- The standards attained by students in the sixth form in economics.
- The gymnasium as it is too small to allow students to take part in an appropriate range of sports.

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

The school itself has identified most of these areas for improvement.

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

The school was last inspected in February 1996, and has made sound progress since then. It has sustained high standards and improved the quality of teaching. Major improvements have been made to the buildings and these have improved the quality of education. Satisfactory progress has been made with the key issues from the last inspection, although the school acknowledges that further work is needed for some of them. The school has the capacity for further improvement. However, improvements in the planning process are needed in order to make the best possible progress.

## STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	Compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1997	1998	1999	1999
GCSE examinations	A*	A*	A*	B
A-levels/AS-levels	A*	A*	A*	

Key	
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

In comparison with all schools, the GCSE and A-level results are in the highest 5% nationally, as are the results of the national tests in English, mathematics and science for 14 year olds. Compared with other selective schools, the GCSE results are above average. Students achieve well throughout the school and standards are high in all subjects except for A-level economics where there has not been a permanent teacher for the first half of the autumn term. The rate of improvements in GCSE results is broadly in line with the national trend. Although standards in GCSE information and communication technology (ICT) are high, the overall standard of 16 year olds who do not follow an ICT course are lower than expectations because of insufficient opportunities to apply, consolidate and develop their capabilities in a range of other subjects. The school has set appropriate targets for its GCSE results in 2001 and 2002. Students' achievements are good.

## STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent, and these attitudes make a significant contribution to students' good levels of achievement. They are keen to be involved in all lessons, and often ask perceptive, demanding questions. They respond very positively to good teaching.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent in lessons and around the school. Occasionally, behaviour is less good because of less effective aspects of teaching. There were five short fixed-term exclusions last year, which is below average.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between students and staff and amongst students are excellent. Students respect the feelings, values and beliefs of others. They work well collaboratively and actively help each other with their work, for example in ICT and design and technology. The temporary suspension of the library and weaknesses in a minority of lessons limit students' use of their initiative and skills of independent learning.
Attendance	Excellent. Attendance is above average for selective schools, and the rate of unauthorised absence is well below the national average.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of students:	Aged 11-14 years	aged 14-16 years	aged over 16 years
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	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.*

Teaching was satisfactory or better in 98% of lessons, good or better in 77%, very good or better in 34% and unsatisfactory in 2%. The quality of teaching in English is good at Key Stage 3 and GCSE, and very good at A level. In mathematics, teaching is good throughout the school and science is very good in Key Stage 3 and good at GCSE and A level. Particular strengths in teaching are teachers' very good levels of subject knowledge, thorough planning, very effective classroom management, and high expectations of what the students can achieve. In 18% of lessons, teaching was satisfactory but it did not allow students to make the best possible progress. For example, either the teaching did not ensure that all students were always fully involved, or the tasks were not challenging enough to ensure good learning. Teaching meets the needs of all students including those with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. Numeracy skills are taught very well in mathematics and used effectively in other subjects. Students' literacy skills are not always used effectively by subjects other than English, especially when writing for different purposes and audiences.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The strengths of the curriculum are the breadth and balance for Key Stage 3 and the sixth form. There is also very good provision of extracurricular activities, careers education and the work-related curriculum. Sixth form students have some excellent opportunities for curriculum enrichment. Provision for personal, social and health education has improved since the last inspection, but there are still weaknesses in Key Stage 3 provision. Statutory requirements are not met for teaching ICT through other subjects, and for all students to take a GCSE course in design and technology.
Provision for students with special educational needs	Good. These students make good progress and achieve high standards.
Provision for students with English as an additional language	Students with English as an additional language make the same progress and achieve at least similar standards to the other students. The small number of students whose English skills are below average for the school are given effective support by teachers who know their needs well.
Provision for students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Opportunities for spiritual development are good although the requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not met. Opportunities for students' moral development are excellent. The school has a strong moral code and, in several subjects, there are opportunities to consider ethical questions. There is good provision for their social and cultural development.



How well the school cares for its students	The school provides very good guidance for students in their academic and personal development from the time they start in the lower school until the time they leave. Teachers know students very well, are aware of their individual needs and generally respond in a positive and supportive way. There have been improvements to assessment since the last inspection, but assessment and its use in improving standards is still an area for development in Years 7 to 11. Child protection arrangements are sound.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	The school is developing good links with the parents. A strong parent-teacher association arranges successful fundraising and social events. Very good educational support is given to students by their parents. Almost all parents attend parents' evenings.

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

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and others in posts of responsibility give a strong lead in implementing very worthwhile ideals within a traditional grammar school environment. The role of head of faculty is not always carried out effectively. The work of middle managers does not always include sufficient monitoring of teaching and students' work. However, senior and middle managers have recently received training in monitoring skills.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Governors are very committed to the school and several are actively involved in its life. However, they are not sufficiently involved in strategic planning. They have a sound knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They monitor standards well but are less effective in monitoring the quality of education the school provides. They carry out their responsibilities satisfactorily .
The school's evaluation of its performance	The headteacher has accurately evaluated the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school evaluates students' exam results carefully, and knows that the monitoring and support of teaching needs to be introduced systematically.
The strategic use of resources	There has been good strategic planning for the major improvement to the school's buildings. In 1999, a school development plan covering three years was devised with the full participation of staff. While all of the items in the plan are valid, the plan lacks the expected structure. The school applies the principles of best value to its resource use.
The adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources	The expertise of the staff is appropriate for the curriculum. The number of students per teacher is well above average for selective schools. The gymnasium is too small and there is not an appropriate room for drama. The governors, staff and parent-teacher association are seeking to improve these facilities. There are insufficient computers. When the library is housed in its new building, the current library stock will be inadequate.

#### PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases many parents most	What some parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standards are high and their children make good progress.</li> <li>Homework is consistently set.</li> <li>The school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is not a consistent approach to the marking of work.</li> <li>A few teachers adopt a harsh approach to discipline.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching is good.</li> <li>• Sixth formers are confident, polite and relaxed.</li> <li>• The boys are competitive without being arrogant.</li> <li>• Behaviour is good and their sons like school.</li> <li>• The school is helping their sons become mature and responsible.</li> <li>• Almost all teachers adopt a positive, fair approach to discipline.</li> <li>• The school helps the vast majority of students to learn and make progress.</li> <li>• They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions and problems.</li> <li>• Parents' evenings are useful.</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed.</li> <li>• The school does a good job despite its financial problems.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In a minority of cases, students are not given enough encouragement.</li> <li>• The arts and humanities subjects reaching standards similar to those in mathematics and science.</li> </ul>
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Parents are very supportive of the school, and the inspection evidence supports their positive views. There is not yet a fully consistent approach to marking. Three instances of oppressive discipline were observed during the inspection. There was no first-hand evidence about students not being given enough encouragement. In both 1999 and 2000, the average A-level grade for English was higher than the average grades for the sciences and mathematics.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. In this report, the term 'standards' refers to students' attainment relative to some clear benchmark such as National Curriculum levels at the end of a key stage, or GCSE results in comparison to the national average for selective schools. 'Above average standards', for example, means that a higher proportion of students of a particular age are succeeding beyond the level set in the majority of schools. 'Achievement', on the other hand, reflects the accomplishments of students in relation to what you would expect of those particular students. The students' prior attainment, what they already know, understand and can do, is the reference point for students' achievement. National statistics are available for the 1999 results, so the school's results for that year are compared with national averages for that year.
2. Overall, the school's results in the national assessments at the end of Year 9 are very high compared to national averages, and above the national average for all selective schools. For mathematics and science, these results are well above national averages for selective schools, while for English the results are average for selective schools. The English results reflect the fact that nationally boys do less well than girls in this subject. The improvement in the school's results in the national tests from 1997 to 1999 has been at the same rate as the national trend of improvement. In other subjects at the end of Year 9, standards are well above national averages except for design and technology and physical education where standards are above average. Students' achievements are good during Key Stage 3.
3. The school's average GCSE results per student are very high compared to the national average results per student for all schools. In comparison to the average for all selective schools, the results are above average. The percentage of students obtaining five or more GCSEs at grades A\* to C is very high compared to all schools and only average for selective schools because a very small number of students do not achieve the results they should. The improvement in the school's GCSE results from 1997 to 1999 has been at the same rate as the national trend of improvement. Taking into account the results of every student, the progress that students made from Key Stage 3 in 1997 to GCSE in 1999 was above average for selective schools.
4. The 1999 GCSE results for English language were average for selective schools. The results for English literature were below average for selective schools but improved markedly in 2000. These results reflect the fact that nationally boys do less well than girls in English. The results for mathematics were above average for selective schools, and the science results were well above average. In 1999, the results for art, information and communications technology (ICT), French, music, physical education, religious education and business studies were well above average for selective schools. Results for geography and history were average for selective schools, although there was a marked improvement in geography results in 2000. Design and technology results in 1999 were well above average for all schools but below average for selective schools. These results were depressed by the results of the GCSE short course in design and technology, which fewer students now take. German results were also below average for selective schools in 1999. Results for both subjects improved in 2000.
5. The standards of the current Year 11 students reflect these results and students' achievement is good. The current Year 11 students will be the first to take a GCSE examination in drama, and their standards are above average. Standards in ICT at the end of

Key Stage 4 are high for the relatively small number of students taking the GCSE course. Although there are examples of high standards in individual pieces of subject-based work, the overall standards for the majority who do not follow ICT courses is lower than expectations because of insufficient opportunities to apply, consolidate and further develop their capabilities in a range of different subjects.

6. A student's GCSE result in one subject can be compared with his average result for the other subjects he took. This enables comparisons to be made between different subjects. In 1999, students did better than average in art, business studies, chemistry, French, mathematics and physics. They did worse than average in design and technology and English. The school's targets for GCSE results in 2001 are appropriate, and it is aiming for all students to achieve five or more GCSE passes at grades A\* to C.
7. At A level, the average result per student was very high compared to national averages for all schools from 1997 to 2000, and above average for selective schools. The 1999 results were above average for selective schools in English literature, physics, general studies and art. Results were average for selective schools in mathematics, geography, history, physical education, and business studies. There were results below the selective schools' average in chemistry, biology, French and economics. Few students took the exams in German and design and technology, and so reliable comparisons cannot be made with national averages. The 1999 French and economics results were also below average for all schools. In 2000, the average result per student in English literature was higher than the averages for mathematics and science. About half of the students in the upper sixth take A-level general studies, and their results are above average for selective schools with a high proportion obtaining the highest grades. The standards of the current Year 13 students generally reflect these results. Because there has been very little specialist teaching of economics for the first half of the autumn term, Year 13 students are not as confident about what they know, understand and can do in economics as they are about their other subjects. In A-level French and German, standards are not as good in speaking as they are in reading and writing.
8. Standards of literacy in other subjects are generally good. Speaking and listening skills are very good. Students are usually fluent and articulate in their use of standard English, encouraged by good oral activities, sensitive teaching and skilful questioning. Students have high reading standards, though wider, independent reading and reading for research are limited by the library being closed for rebuilding and refurbishment. In all subjects, students make notes using correct vocabulary for that subject. They make good use of charts, graphs, grids and diagrams to aid their planning of short written responses. Much work is neatly presented and word processed. However, drafting and developing more extended writing is restricted to one or two subjects apart from English and this is a weakness. There are some good instances of drafting in geography and business studies. There is limited experience of writing for different purposes and audiences. Without a whole-school policy on developing literacy across the curriculum, inconsistencies result in teacher expectation and approach, and this is an area for development.
9. For the key skill of numeracy, students of all ages demonstrate very good arithmetical skills. They can use these with relative ease wherever the need arises in their studies in all subjects. Mathematical concepts and processes are assimilated naturally into their work in many areas of the curriculum. For instance, there are many examples of students planning their work with flow charts, and using data handling techniques without teachers even suggesting them. The wide range of numerical skills frequently demonstrated by the students assist them greatly in understanding new work quickly.
10. Students with English as an additional language are usually very capable English speakers, and the school's analysis shows that these students achieve standards similar to or better

than those of other students. Those students on the school's register of special educational needs achieve well because teachers know their needs and provision is well managed.

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

11. Students' attitudes to work are excellent and these make a significant contribution to their good levels of achievement. They are keen to be involved in lessons, and often ask perceptive, demanding questions. In physical education lessons, all students wish to participate. They sustain their listening and concentration very effectively in many lessons.
12. Students' attendance rate is excellent, and well above average for selective schools.
13. Behaviour is excellent in lessons and around the school. Occasionally, behaviour is less good as a result of weaknesses in teaching. There were five fixed-term exclusions last year. This is below average. There was no evidence of bullying during the inspection, and relationships between students of different ethnic backgrounds are very good indeed. They respect the feelings, values and beliefs of others. For example, in a geography lesson, students confidently talked about their own experiences of migration and, in a religious education lesson, the class appreciated the contribution of students with Jewish, Muslim and Hindu beliefs. They value the views of others even if they do not share them.
14. Students work well collaboratively, and actively helped each other in some lessons observed, particularly in design and technology and ICT. When the opportunities are provided, students will use their initiative and take responsibility. For example, in design and technology, students have good opportunities to use their well-developed problem-solving skills, and there are very good opportunities for initiative in, for example, art homework and geography GCSE and A-level coursework. Students have good research skills and a good capacity for independent study, but the suspension of the library during the rebuilding limits opportunities to use and develop these. However, a few teachers do not give students enough opportunity to use their initiative although, in some cases, this is because of relatively large classes in small classrooms.

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

15. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. The overall quality of teaching is good and this results in very effective learning. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 98% of lesson seen, good or better in 77% and very good or better in 34%. Teaching was unsatisfactory in 2% of lessons. The quality of teaching was similar at Key Stages 3 and 4, and slightly better in the sixth form. During the inspection, the teaching seen was good or better in all subjects, although no teaching was seen for economics.
16. A common strength of the teaching is the teachers' very good knowledge of their subjects which results in clear explanations and good answers to students' demanding questions, as in geography and religious education. In mathematics, the best teaching makes quite difficult concepts easy to understand and, in English, teachers provide sequences of language activities that build on and extend students' previous learning. In art, teachers' abilities to draw from popular culture, music and classical art forms help to create an environment that both inspires and motivates students. A strength of French teaching is that the teachers use French that is readily understood by the students. They also ensure that the students communicate in French themselves.

17. Thorough planning results in varied learning activities, as in physical education and science, and these hold students' interest and help them sustain their efforts. In design and technology, interesting and relevant projects are set for students. Students in music and ICT, for example, know what they are expected to learn during lessons. In business studies, the learning objectives are shared with students at the start of lessons and then their learning is reviewed at the end. Most marking is regular and so, for example, students in English know how well they are doing and in religious education students receive good advice on how to improve their work. However, this is not consistent between different subjects and sometimes between different classes within the same subject. Classroom management is commonly effective and this secures a very good response from the students. In design and technology, teachers' supervision is vigilant as Key Stage 3 classes are larger than is normally the case. Time is not wasted and learning resources are well organised and readily to hand as in, for example, music. A key strength that is commonly found is that teachers have high expectations of what the students can achieve. ICT is effectively used in business studies, which has its own small cluster of computers, but this is a weakness in the teaching of other subjects which find it difficult to gain access to the ICT room.
18. The very good and excellent lessons were characterised by detailed planning which included clear learning objectives that were shared with the students right at the start of the lesson. The plans showed logical sequences of varied activities that helped motivate the students and ensure a brisk pace to learning. Because of the teachers' very good subject knowledge and understanding, they set interesting and challenging tasks that motivated the students, and used demanding technical vocabulary that was explained and exemplified. Because of their expertise, teachers teased out important points during class discussions and gave students feedback that showed them how to improve their performance. The teacher's expertise was often linked to very good relationships with the students, and these helped to motivate and enthuse the students by valuing their contributions and ideas. Students were well prepared for the lessons and the teaching built on work from a previous lesson or homework. Homeworks were often set which consolidated or extended the very good learning from the lesson.
19. Teaching was unsatisfactory in very few lessons where students did not learn enough. In one lesson, explanations were not clear and most of the class were confused. In another, the teacher's planning did not show the intended learning, there was a significant weakness in teaching method, the pace of teaching was too slow and the overhead transparency was difficult to read. In a third lesson, the teacher told the students what they could have worked out themselves, and a resource sheet was confusing.
20. In about 18% of lessons, the teaching was satisfactory but did not enable students to make the best possible progress. These lessons included the majority of subjects including English, mathematics and science. Weaknesses observed in the teaching of several of these lessons included a failure to involve all students by, for example, losing eye contact with the students sitting at the front of the class, too much teacher talk which prevented students thinking and discovering for themselves, insufficient variety of tasks so that the teaching was monotonous and students lost interest, and insufficient challenge to the students as the work was too easy. Weaknesses observed in one or a few lessons included disorganised starts which wasted time, using groups of six so some students were left out of the discussion, no time limit for tasks and unclear expectations about how much work students should complete, inappropriate teaching methods which limited students' learning and learning objectives which lacked clarity.
21. Numeracy skills are taught very well in mathematics and used effectively in other subjects. Students' literacy skills are not always used effectively by subjects other than English, especially for writing for different purposes and audiences.

22. The school provides sound support for students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language. The school does not formally identify gifted and talented students, although there are a number of informal activities to encourage these students including some seminars for sixth formers.

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

23. Overall, the quality and range of learning opportunities in the curriculum are good. There are aspects of very good provision as well as a number of weaknesses. The major strengths include the extensive extracurricular provision in the school. A wide range of sporting activities and fixtures are offered, as are opportunities for students who do not have computers at home to work in school, homework and special interest clubs, fundraising ventures, theatre and gallery visits, rehearsals, concerts and drama productions. A large number of students are members of the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and take part in a regular programme of activities.
24. Other strengths include the very good careers education and work-related education undertaken in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. The school has been successful in developing very good relationships with local, national and international companies, charities and community groups. This support is greatly valued by the school, for example, in the annual careers convention, the work experience programme, and in providing training in leadership and management for staff and students. The contribution of the community significantly adds to the range of learning opportunities in the curriculum and prepares students well for lifelong learning and as responsible citizens.
25. The weaknesses concern the inadequate provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) in Key Stage 3 classes and the limited curricular provision within some subjects. Information and communication technology is not systematically taught in subjects across the curriculum and, at Key Stage 4, not all students follow a course in design and technology. In this respect, the curriculum at Key Stage 4, whilst having considerable strengths in some areas, does not fully meet statutory requirements.
26. The action taken to address identified weaknesses in the previous report has led to some improvement. Provision for arts education at Key Stage 4 has been improved with the addition of drama and music, and increased numbers are opting to take art. Psychology, computer studies, religious education and music have been introduced into the sixth form curriculum and students and parents are very happy with the good range of subjects provided. At Key Stage 3, the school now offers one lesson of drama each fortnight.
27. Plans to improve PSHE and to introduce the citizenship programme suggest a high level of commitment and a readiness to implement the revisions to the National Curriculum over the next two years. Year 8 students are to follow a three-day PSHE course in the summer, and eight staff are to be trained to teach this. Nevertheless, the provision for PSHE remains unsatisfactory at Key Stage 3, with just one lesson per fortnight in Year 7. Regular lessons in Years 10 and 11 mark an improvement since the last inspection. The requirement to teach about sex education, sexually transmitted diseases and drugs education is met.
28. There is good provision for students with special educational needs. Teachers know their needs well and this helps to ensure that the work is appropriate. Occasionally, the targets in individual education plans are too general.

29. Developing more extended writing is restricted to one or two subjects besides English, and this is a weakness. There is limited experience of writing for different purposes and audiences. There is not a whole-school policy on developing literacy across the curriculum, and so there are inconsistencies in teachers' expectations and approaches. Students use their very good numeracy skills wherever the need arises. Mathematical concepts and processes are assimilated naturally into their work in many subjects.
30. Overall, there has been satisfactory improvement on most of the curriculum issues identified as points for action in the last report. However, the strategic management of the curriculum is a weakness and individual responsibilities for managing provision, curriculum planning and organisation are not clear to some senior staff. For example, the way students in modern foreign languages were grouped was an issue at the time of the last report and it has not been resolved. Several subjects are still without clear documentation and schemes of work, for example, French and German, economics and PSHE. By contrast, the quality of documentation in English is very good. Several subjects are in the process of adapting schemes of work to improve coverage, as in mathematics, or to meet new requirements, as in music and art. The school now teaches for the recommended minimum time and has introduced a two-week timetable to give added flexibility. Nevertheless, in some subjects in the sixth form, a single period is taught outside the school day and some students find this clashes with extracurricular activities.
31. The school provides a good **sixth form curriculum**, which meets the needs and aspirations of its students well. This provision is cost effective. A good range of subjects is offered at AS and A Level and the new requirements to broaden the scope of students' studies have been met. A number of new subjects that enrich the choices normally provided and that allow formal study and examination in important skills, have been added in recent years. These include psychology, computing and physical education. Students achieve high standards in their courses and a very high proportion successfully go on to further and higher education.
32. The provision of opportunities for enrichment in the **sixth form** outside the examination courses and the extent to which these are taken up by students, are significant strengths. Curriculum enrichment includes a project developed in collaboration with Liverpool University and the Open College of the North West, a Young Enterprise programme and Challenge of Management Conference, the school's CCF and involvement in the local Volunteer Project. A key strength is the very high commitment and belief that teachers have in the projects with which they are involved. The requirement to provide opportunities to learn key skills is generally met. Opportunities to develop communication skills are provided naturally within the requirements of examination courses, and those for public speaking in a range of activities within the enrichment programmes. A very high proportion of students take courses such as mathematics, science, business studies and geography that provide substantial opportunities for use of number and ICT skills. Broader key skills that enable students to reflect upon and improve their performance are promoted very well in curriculum enrichment programmes, careers education and guidance programmes, and the tutorial system. Certification for key skills has not yet been inaugurated, but preparations are advancing well. A co-ordinated programme of study should now be developed to ensure full provision of key skills for all, and to support validation for certification. Religious education is satisfactorily provided. There is a weekly games afternoon and very high involvement of sixth form students in team sports.
33. The provision for spiritual development in the school has improved since the last inspection and is now good. However, daily acts of worship are still not provided for all students and so the statutory requirements for this area are not being fully met. Spiritual awareness is promoted well in English, art, music and modern languages. The provision in religious education is particularly effective where discussion on spiritual matters covers a good range of world religions. The sixth form general studies programme in Year 13 includes some good opportunities for religious education. Students who are practising Muslims are able to attend



weekly prayer meetings in school, and there is a Christian group as well. A member of staff occasionally holds assemblies on Judaism.

34. The provision for moral development is excellent. The school has a strong moral code and students clearly understand the difference between right and wrong. Most teachers present very good role models for behaviour and consideration of others. In English, geography, religious education and business studies students are challenged to think about morality and ethics.
35. Social development is very well catered for. A range of opportunities for students to work together are provided in extracurricular activities such as the CCF, drama and music productions, and the Young Enterprise Scheme. Group work is used well in some subjects, such as English. A school council is now in place giving students a chance to give their views to staff on a range of issues. Social development is particularly good at the top of the school where sixth form students show impressive presentation skills.
36. The school offers very good opportunities for students' cultural development. Some visits to art galleries and theatres are provided, as well as trips to France and Germany for younger students. No foreign exchanges are currently being provided, although a small number of students carry out work experience in Berlin. Awareness of other cultures is promoted well through discussions in art, English, religious education and science.

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

37. The school supplies very good guidance for students in their academic and personal development from the time they start in the lower school until the time they leave. Teachers know students very well, are aware of their individual needs and generally respond in a positive and supportive way. This is evident in all aspects of the work of the school and is a strength. There is an extensive support structure which is sensitive to the students' needs.
38. The promotion of good behaviour is an excellent aspect of the work of the school and the staff. Students and parents are clear about the school's expectations. There is a very good system of rewards and sanctions which are generally applied sensitively and flexibly to ensure a harmonious and mutually supportive school community. The promotion and monitoring of good behaviour make a significant contribution to the quality of education in the school and to the standards of achievement.
39. Good procedures are in place for the monitoring of students' attendance. Registers are completed regularly and efficiently at the beginning of each session except when a class travels to the sports field during the lunch hour and so is not in school at the start of afternoon lessons. Although most students have very good attendance, the few unexplained absences are promptly and efficiently followed up. Attendance is very successfully promoted in the school and this is reflected in the excellent attendance figures.
40. Appropriate procedures are in place for dealing with child protection issues. However, there is not complete clarity as to who is the designated member of staff for this area. Local authority guidelines are followed when dealing with any concerns and the headteacher and special needs co-ordinator have received training in this area. The rest of the staff have not had recent training.
41. The school has procedures for reporting and dealing with health and safety issues as they occur. No formal whole-school risk assessments are taking place regularly, as is required by

law. Accident books are used properly to record incidents and an appropriate number of staff have had first-aid training.

42. The school's provision for assessment is satisfactory overall, with some strengths and weaknesses. School guidelines on assessment, recording and reporting amount to a statement of general principles with specific instructions on marking students' work. Marking is generally clear across all subjects and students appreciate it when there is a speedy return of work with the inclusion of helpful comments and targets for improvement. It is left to subject departments to formulate their own interpretations of assessment and there is variation in practice between departments. English offers an example of good department assessment and pupil self-assessment. A simplified chart used by the younger students lists clear criteria and stages, and enables them to know how well they are doing and what they must do to make progress. However, in Modern Foreign Languages, a clear and consistent approach to assessment is lacking and the links to National Curriculum levels are weak. Generally, there have been improvements since the last inspection, but assessment and its use in improving standards is still an area for development in Years 7 to 11. A wider discussion and exchange of good assessment practices between departments would be beneficial.
43. **Sixth form** students benefit from a very good level of support and guidance. The setting of target minimum grades at the start of their A-level course in each subject and the regular assessment and monitoring against these targets help students to know how well they are doing and what action to take to improve. Personal development is also carefully monitored, and students are encouraged and expected to take on considerable responsibility, and develop independence and initiative. The head of sixth form, form tutors and subject staff all know the students well and are often willing to give as much help as they can to ensure that the students, including any who may have special educational needs, achieve their potential. The arrangements for university applications are well managed and students have access to high quality advice about their applications and personal statements.

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

44. The school is developing good links with its parents who are very appreciative of the education the school provides for their sons. Good information is provided in the form of termly letters from the headteacher, report cards and annual consultation meetings. The school's brochure, although attractively presented and informative, does not comply fully with the statutory requirements for its contents. It does not contain the school's aims nor any information on the school's arrangements for students with special educational needs.
45. Reports are issued annually to parents. These are well written and informative. They contain useful targets for students to work towards and give both parents and students themselves an opportunity to add written comments. Parents of students with special educational needs are kept well informed of their progress and are fully involved in their reviews. Recent consultations with parents concerning the introduction of a home-school contract were very productive and the school intends to use this process for more issues in future.
46. The school benefits from a strong parent-teacher association that arranges regular fundraising and social events. These are well attended and raise significant extra funding for the school. Most recently, these funds were used to support the refurbishment of the sixth form block. Parents are very supportive of their sons' work at school and home. Students use computers extensively at home to supplement their school work, and wider learning is supported through trips to libraries, art galleries and museums. A wide range of opportunities for work experience are provided for students by parents.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

47. The headteacher and others in posts of responsibility give a strong lead in implementing very worthwhile ideals within a traditional grammar school environment. The school's aims are wide-ranging and appropriate. They seek principally to promote high academic ideals and to cultivate humanity and integrity in all students. The success of this aspect of leadership is evident from the good academic standards achieved by students in relation to their abilities and from their thoughtful and civilised attitudes and behaviour. The school's targets for attainment are appropriately challenging and have been largely met each year.
48. The structure for managing the school has changed little from the time of the previous inspection. The academic and pastoral boards carry out their functions very well. Heads of department organise their subjects effectively. The operation of the faculty structure, however, has significant weaknesses and, in the case of two faculties, it is ineffective. The job description for the heads of faculty provides an inadequate basis for effective line-management and is not implemented fully. Heads of department are allowed considerable autonomy but departments, particularly where there are only one or two teachers, work largely in professional isolation. There is some lack of clarity about which senior manager has overall responsibility for the curriculum. The present system of management relies too much on informal contact between heads of department and the senior management. There is a strong commitment on the part of all staff to improving the effectiveness of the school still further. The staff possess a good capacity for this, but they are restricted at present by weaknesses in the management of two faculties, insufficient monitoring and support for teaching, and inconsistencies in subject development planning.
49. Members of the governing body are very committed to the school. They meet regularly and are well informed. They keenly analyse examination results and set rigorous targets for the head and deputy head. There is no curriculum committee and the governors have not ensured that design and ICT are taught as fully as is required by the National Curriculum. Governors rely heavily on the headteacher over the contents of the school's development plan, which they approve. Governors are therefore less involved in strategic planning than is usual. Governors have a satisfactory knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses but they do not gain first-hand information by systematically visiting lessons. The expertise of governors has been invaluable in helping the school achieve a balanced annual budget. Overall, the governing body carries out its statutory duties satisfactorily.
50. There has been inadequate monitoring of teaching in recent years until last term, when the headteacher carried out lesson observations in connection with the forthcoming threshold assessment arrangements. The school has had no system for evaluating teaching and linking this with in-service training or personal targets. However, a good scheme for the future management of teachers' performance has been devised. An appropriate number of staff have been trained as assessors, arrangements have been approved by the governing body and all staff, and the scheme will shortly be implemented.
51. In 1999, a school development plan covering three years was devised with the full participation of staff. While all of the items on the extensive list are valid, the plan is unrealistically wide and lacks detail. It has no priorities, timescales or criteria for success for the current year, and it is not a working document that is familiar to staff. Those with responsibility for individual developments are not named. Items are selected from the list as funds become available. In other respects, the school's financial planning is good, leading to very worthwhile developments. The school plans well for achieving its academic targets. A negative budget has been eradicated, an extensive building plan is taking place, and a

successful bid has been made for funds to extend provision for information and communication technology.

52. Financial administration is good, and well supported by the use of new technology. Computers are increasingly used to enhance efficiency throughout the school. All specific grants, for example, for special educational needs, are spent for their intended purpose. The school is a member of a group of schools of similar type in south London which compare costs and expenditure regularly. All expenditure is very carefully considered and the school works rigorously to apply best-value principles.
53. Formal structures for running the **sixth form** are not a strength, but the informal relationships between those involved and their shared high commitment to the sixth form, provide generally good leadership and management. The sixth form is a very cohesive unit, which promotes teaching and learning well, and provides an environment in which students feel valued. They are well known and supported as individuals. The provision of opportunities to meet the new curricular requirements has been efficiently managed and those involved have a good awareness of the need for continued development of this aspect of their responsibilities. The area of sixth form life that remains least satisfactory is the level of accommodation and facilities for social interaction and private study, which are inadequate. They are too small and poorly furnished.
54. The school is well staffed to teach the curriculum. Well-qualified and experienced teachers have a positive impact upon teaching and learning in most subjects. In English, the high number of part-time teachers of the subject results in some loss of continuity, with some classes being shared between more than one teacher. The very good standards achieved in the sixth form are promoted well by the skills and enthusiasm of teachers for their specialist subjects, such as in English, art and ICT. Science benefits from a very good provision of technician support, and two modern languages assistants have an impact on learning in that subject. The school has, however, recently found it difficult to recruit suitable teachers and support staff for some subjects. This has had an impact on the teaching of economics, with little active teaching taking place in the first half of the current term. There is currently not a librarian but the school is advertising for a full-time professional librarian. In a few subjects, there has been insufficient training.
55. In the face of many difficulties presented by its restricted site and financial constraints, the school has shown considerable energy and enterprise in finding ways to fund and address many of the accommodation problems identified at the time of the previous inspection. Although the school was still suffering some of the short-term disruption of large-scale building works during the current inspection, improvements have been clear and dramatic. Most of the grim huts have been cleared away and a number of subjects, including geography, history and music, that were taught in difficult and uninspiring circumstances are now housed in new accommodation. ICT lessons now take place in a room with much more space and in which teachers are able to see all students at once. The number of subjects in which lessons do not take place in adjacent rooms is now much reduced. Design and technology, which still takes place in a less than satisfactory situation, is soon to move into new accommodation, and problems of teaching and storage facing English are shortly to be addressed. A new library building is nearing completion. However, the school's accommodation remains unsatisfactory in many respects. Although the school's outdoor pool is used well, the other on-site facilities for physical education are inadequate. The gym is too small. The school has good outdoor facilities, but these are some distance from the school, so that teachers have to drive students there in a coach. In addition to increasing expense and burdens upon the teachers, this eats into lesson time. The teaching of science suffers from taking place in laboratories that, although in better decorative condition than at the last inspection, are too small for the numbers of students in teaching groups, and are too few, so that they have a very high occupancy rate, making development work difficult. The small size of the music accommodation makes practical work difficult and sixth formers have nowhere to undertake their art work as part of their private study during school time. The smallness of the modern languages accommodation restricts the range of activities that are possible.

56. The school has suffered severe funding restrictions in recent years and, in spite of much effort in pursuing additional finance, continues to have a low level of expenditure per pupil. Resources are satisfactory in English (albeit with a heavy reliance upon students providing their own books), mathematics, geography, history, physical education and special educational needs, where teachers make a significant contribution by effectively modifying general material. Other departments have resources that are generally adequate, but with weaknesses. In modern languages, the resources for German, where continuity suffers due to the lack of a common textbook in all years, are inferior to those for French. There is limited variety in resources for religious education, including too few artefacts. More listening materials and consumables such as drum beaters are needed in music. Learning resources are unsatisfactory in some key areas of the curriculum. There is inadequate funding to replace obsolete science equipment. ICT resources are inadequate to meet the needs of the curriculum, with the result that most subjects are denied sufficient access to meet their own National Curriculum requirements to provide opportunities to use computers where appropriate, and the school does not meet its overall statutory requirement at Key Stage 4. Resources for design and technology, particularly computer-aided design, are too limited. The school has had no access to library resources for some time, because these have been in store, awaiting completion of the new library. Even when they are housed in the new accommodation, the current library stock will be insufficient in quantity and quality, due to a backlog of underfunding.

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

57. To further raise standards, the governing body, headteacher and staff should:

- implement, as planned, a systematic programme for the monitoring and support of teaching; [19, 20, 50]
- formalise and implement plans for other subjects to use ICT during Key Stages 3 and 4 so that students apply and improve their skills in a planned, systematic way; [5, 25, 110]
- provide all students with a design and technology course at Key Stage 4; [25, 93]
- implement a plan to help A-level economics students to make up lost ground because of a lack of specialist teaching; [7, 146]
- continue to use their best endeavours to secure improvement to the indoor accommodation for physical education on the school's site. [55, 138]

*[Numbers refer to the relevant paragraphs in the body of the report.]*

58. In addition to these key issues, the governors, headteacher and staff should consider the following issues for inclusion in the action plan:

- continued improvement to PHSE during Key Stage 3; [27]
- improved use of assessment data to raise standards; [42]
- provide and use a good scheme of work in history; [107]
- improve management in two faculties; [48]
- involve the governing body more fully in school development planning with the advice of the headteacher; [49, 50]
- continue to improve the library stock; [69]
- implement the schemes of work in modern languages and put in place more rigorous assessment procedures. [125]



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	152
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and students	35

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9	25	43	21	2	0	0

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

### Information about the school's students

Students on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students on the school's roll	590	201
Number of full-time students eligible for free school meals	11	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of students with statements of special educational needs	3	0
Number of students on the school's special educational needs register	17	4

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of students with English as an additional language	93

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Students who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	21
Students who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	14

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	4.6
National comparative data	7.9

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	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered students in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	1999	115	0	115

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	113	112	111
	Girls	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Total	113	112	111
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	98 (99)	97 (99)	97 (99)
	National	63 (65)	62 (60)	55 (56)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	74 (93)	97 (98)	92 (93)
	National	28 (35)	38 (36)	23 (27)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of students at NC level 5 and above	Boys	114	114	113
	Girls	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Total	114	114	113
Percentage of students at NC level 5 or above	School	100 (100)	99 (100)	98 (98)
	National	64 (62)	64 (64)	60 (62)
Percentage of students at NC level 6 or above	School	89 (95)	99 (100)	90 (89)
	National	31 (31)	37 (37)	28 (31)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	108	0	108

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of students achieving the standard specified	Boys	105	108	108
	Girls	N/a	N/a	N/a
	Total	105	108	108
Percentage of students achieving the standard specified	School	97 (94)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	46.6 (44.6)	90.9 (89.6)	95.8 (95.2)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	63 (56)
	National	38 (38.6)

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

### Attainment at the end of the sixth form

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	1999	85	0	85

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	23.9	N/a	23.9 (25.5)	2	N/a	2.0 (n/a)
National	17.7	18.1	17.9 (17.6)	2.7	2.8	2.8 (2.8)

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

### ***Ethnic background of students***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	5
Black – African heritage	3
Black – other	4
Indian	49
Pakistani	18
Bangladeshi	6
Chinese	15
White	590
Any other minority ethnic group	101

### ***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	5	0
Other minority ethnic groups	2	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	40.3
Number of students per qualified teacher	19.6

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Education support staff: Y[ ] – Y[ ]**

Total number of education support staff	5
Total aggregate hours worked per week	127

#### **Deployment of teachers: Y[ ] – Y[ ]**

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	77.7
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	30
Key Stage 4	23.3

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	1,842,521
Total expenditure	1,829,475
Expenditure per pupil	2,400
Balance brought forward from previous year	-15,415
Balance carried forward to next year	-2,369

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	791
Number of questionnaires returned	481

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	47	45	6	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	46	46	2	1	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	50	46	1	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	53	8	2	2
The teaching is good.	44	50	1	0	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	31	47	12	2	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	47	43	6	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his best.	74	25	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	24	52	12	3	9
The school is well led and managed.	51	42	2	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	52	39	4	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	30	49	8	2	11

## **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **ENGLISH**

59. GCSE results in English language have remained steady since the last inspection. In 1999, results were very high in comparison with the national average and broadly in line with selective schools. Results in GCSE English literature have been variable. In 1999, results were higher than the national average, but lower than the average for selective schools. There was a marked improvement in 2000. All students are now entered for this examination which was not the case at the last inspection. Students traditionally perform less well than girls in the English subjects and the school's GCSE literature results reflect that difference when compared to national figures. English and English literature results were not as good as mathematics or science, especially at the higher grades, and this echoes the national picture which shows students do less well in English than in mathematics or science. A-level English language results dipped to well below the national average in 1999, but improved in 2000. Results in A-level English literature, which traditionally attracts a larger group of students in the school than language, were well above average in 1999, with a high proportion of students gaining the highest grades. Results in 2000 were good with the average grade higher than mathematics or science, but with fewer entries. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 have been very high for the last three years in comparison with the national average and broadly in line with similar schools. However, as in GCSE, they have not been as good as results in mathematics or science.
60. The evidence of students' work and the lessons observed show that achievement in all areas of English is good, though more variable in the sixth form. Standards in speaking and listening are very high. Students are articulate and self-confident when answering questions, when giving formal presentations and in role play in class. Their skills develop as they move through the school in response to the imaginative, systematic opportunities offered in class.
61. Reading standards are very good. Students read a variety of demanding texts independently and with good understanding. Stories and plays read in class are generally seen as a source of pleasure and provide good stimuli for the study of English language. The students show definite preferences. For example, the multi-cultural writing of Guyanese poet Grace Nicholls captured the imagination more than the English Victorian poet Browning. The high standard reached in reading challenging literature results from well-chosen texts, and constructive and detailed guidance from the teacher.
62. Writing standards are usually very good. Finished writing can be of a very high standard as a result of careful planning and drafting which starts in Year 7 and continues throughout the school. There are examples of very perceptive and impressive GCSE coursework essays. However, a minority of students in Years 10 and 11 begin to struggle with the demanding texts and the extended writing requirements of GCSE. Their written work lacks detail and accuracy and there is a deterioration in their presentation. By the age of 18, written work of the higher attainers is of a very high standard especially in English literature. It is coherently organised, incisive and accurate. Students effectively use the study of professional writers to enhance their own writing. After reading 'Waiting for Godot', for example, an A-level class wrote and performed short scenes in the style of Samuel Beckett, cleverly catching the humour, isolation and absurdity of Beckett's characters.
63. Standards of literacy in other subjects are generally good. Speaking and listening skills are very good. Students are usually fluent and articulate in their use of standard English, encouraged by good oral activities, sensitive teaching and skilful questioning. Students have

high reading standards, though wider, independent reading and reading for research are limited by the library being closed for rebuilding and refurbishment. In all subjects, students make notes using correct vocabulary for that subject. They make good use of charts, graphs, grids and diagrams to aid their planning of short written responses. Much work is neatly presented and word processed. However, drafting and developing more extended writing is restricted to one or two subjects apart from English and this is a weakness. There is limited experience of writing for different purposes and audiences. Without a whole-school policy on developing literacy across the curriculum, inconsistencies result in teacher expectation and approach, and this is an area for development.

64. From a high standard of English when they enter Year 7, students make good progress as they move through the school. In Year 7, for example, students reading the novel 'Goodnight Mr Tom', quickly acquire skills in reading and interpreting the text as they bring together several themes in the narrative relating them to their own experiences. This leads to a growing appreciation of the craft of the writer and in reading more demanding texts with critical awareness. A newly devised unit on literacy skills in Year 7 helps students to focus on the accurate use of language. Oral and written work show a progressive grasp of themes and characterisation as students move through Year 8, and work is extended to include a study of media. An impressive example of the high challenge in Year 8 media was seen in the close analysis of one evening's news relayed on five television channels. In Year 9, students increasingly initiate debate and develop reasoned argument. A Year 9 class displayed impressive verbal skills of persuasion, and used humour and thorough research to claim the 'contract' to market their product - fruit-flavoured crisps. Skills acquired in speaking and listening become more refined as students approach GCSE. This was seen when a Year 10 class interviewed and filmed each other, using studied television techniques, on ways to solve the recent petrol crisis. They displayed such conviction that even the presentation which proposed using child labour to push cars was almost credible. The majority of students in Year 10 and 11 make good progress but, for a minority, basic errors persist in spelling, punctuation and particularly in the development of ideas in longer essay writing. Progress throughout the two-year A-level course is underpinned by very good class teaching and detailed, constructive marking of work. However, some of the students approaching advanced English with average or lower attainment at GCSE experience literacy difficulties and struggle with the extended writing requirements; this is reflected in their A-level results.
65. The small number of students with special educational needs make good progress in all aspects of their work. Sensitive work by the teachers and their good knowledge of the students lead to early identification of learning problems.
66. Students' attitudes to learning are very good. They work conscientiously, with good humour, mainly sustaining their efforts in lessons and contributing well to the teacher's requirements. Younger students maintain their interest when teaching is stimulating with varied activities and they are led to place a high value on English. Students work increasingly well together in pairs and groups as they move through the school. In the sixth form, most students show a sense of purpose and urgency in their work. However, the suspension of the library during rebuilding and the lack of any computers in the department for research set limits on the opportunities for independent study.
67. The overall quality of teaching is good, and very good in the sixth form. Teaching has improved since the last inspection. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject and are adept at providing sequences of language activities that build progressively on students' learning. In the best lessons, there is rigour, palpable enthusiasm and often a dash of the unexpected. Less successful is the occasional lesson where pace is restrained by too much teacher direction and intervention which prevents students thinking for themselves.

Students benefit from the consistently secure routines. They know how well they are doing from the positive marking of work and regular assessment. Teachers increasingly develop students' personal responsibility when they involve them in assessing their own and each other's work, and in negotiating individual targets for improvement. Regular visits are organised to the professional theatre which support and extend the work done in class.

68. Schemes of work have been rewritten and improved since the last inspection. A strength is their clear continuity from one year to the next, with themes overlapping between years, and with regular assessment of defined learning objectives. High expectations for attainment are revealed in the simplified criteria given to and used by each pupil. The department is inadequately resourced and there is a heavy reliance on students buying their own books for GCSE and A-level which they may then annotate. Weaknesses in accommodation for storage and department administration are in the process of being addressed. The use of information technology is still irregular and too dependent on students' access to equipment at home
69. The management of the department is effective with a good working handbook and clear directives on administration, marking and examination requirements. There is a strong commitment to improve and to raise the profile of English in the school. The department works as a team with many responsibilities shared. Closer links with primary schools is an area for development in relation to building on the teaching of literacy. A large new library building had just been completed at the time of the inspection. The school is seeking to appoint a professional librarian. Although the fiction books have been considerably improved since the previous inspection, the library's stock still needs improvement.

## **MATHEMATICS**

70. Standards of attainment in mathematics are very high compared to the national averages for all schools, and represent good levels of achievement for students of all ages. In 1999, Key Stage 3 test results were very high compared with the national average, as they had been in 1997 and 1998. They were well above average for selective schools. Results in 2000 were similar. There has been a rising trend particularly at the higher National Curriculum levels between 1997 and 2000. Key Stage 3 results in mathematics were better than in English and science.
71. GCSE standards in mathematics in 1999 were very high compared with all schools nationally, and above average for selective schools. All students gained a result in the range A\*-C and, significantly, 95 per cent achieved an A\*, A or B. Results improved between 1997 and 2000 and were much better than an average for the same students' other GCSE subjects.
72. Results at A level in 1999 were above average for all schools, and broadly average for selective schools. Further mathematics results were strong. Mathematics is the most popular subject at A level in the school; usually between 40 and 60 students take the course each year. Not all of these students achieve top grades at GCSE. Hence, the results represent good levels of achievement as virtually all students pass in the range A-E and at least half attain grades A or B.
73. The good levels of achievement represented in examination results are confirmed by the current standards of work seen in lessons and work samples. Students enter the school with good levels of mathematical capability and, by the end of Key Stage 3, they have built significantly on this good base. They are particularly good at numerical questions, and work

quickly and confidently in all aspects of the subject. Higher-attaining students in Year 9 display unusually good skills and understanding. For example, they can use graphical calculators confidently to generate families of parabolic curves from algebraic equations as an aid to sketching them.

74. The good progress is made by all students including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, and continues through Key Stage 4. By the end of this key stage, standards are very high. The highest-attaining students in Year 11 have all already passed GCSE at A\* or A grade a year early, and the whole class is studying A level work; this provides a very good base for future A-level studies in mathematics, further mathematics and the sciences. During Year 11, only occasionally is there any underachievement; this is confined to a small number of students in one class, who do not try hard enough. The underachievement in the sixth form at the time of the last inspection has been almost completely eliminated. Standards are well above average at the end of the A-level course, taking mathematics and further mathematics together; students are working at levels consistent with the good results achieved in the previous years. However, the progress of a few students is slightly constrained by their somewhat limited competence in written English, which restricts the quality of their logical explanations.
75. For the key skill of numeracy, students of all ages demonstrate very good arithmetical skills. They can use these with relative ease wherever the need arises in their studies in all subjects. Mathematical concepts and processes are assimilated naturally into their work in many areas of the curriculum. For instance, there are many examples of students planning their work with flow charts, and using data handling techniques without teachers even suggesting them. The wide range of numerical skills frequently demonstrated by the students assist them greatly in understanding new work quickly.
76. The students' good attitudes to work means that they are a joy to teach. They respond very positively to the good quality of teaching that the school provides. Teaching has improved since the last inspection. Almost all lessons observed during the inspection were satisfactory or better, and the great majority were good or very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, explain work clearly and, in the best lessons, make quite difficult concepts easy to understand. Lesson planning is good, and the choice and sequence of examples chosen for explanation lead to quick acquisition of understanding. Good quality of discussion with the students linked with carefully explained examples ensure that learning is secure. A very good learning atmosphere usually prevails in mathematics classes. Weaknesses in teaching are confined to a small number of lessons where learning takes place at a satisfactory, and very occasionally unsatisfactory rate. In these lessons, preparation, choice and sequence of examples and presentation skills could all be improved.
77. The new head of department has made a good start. She has quickly gained the respect of the teachers and students, knows what needs to be done, and has the capacity and energy to achieve the task. Development planning, weak at the time of the previous inspection, has been improved, but it should still be given a far higher profile in the strategic improvement of the subject, linking financial considerations to priorities, timescales and outcomes. The school would benefit from a thoroughly revised and completed scheme of work for all classes, with built-in assessment procedures, designed to take students in a more sequential manner through the levels of the National Curriculum, particularly at Key Stage 3. The current scheme of work suggests the occasions where information technology might be used rather than specifying them as a requirement. Consequently, the school fails to provide students with their minimum National Curriculum entitlement of information technology in their mathematics curriculum. This should be remedied as soon as possible so that the students are not disadvantaged in their future life pathways through a technologically-dependent society.



## SCIENCE

78. By the 1999 end of Key Stage 3 tests, students had reached standards that were very high compared to the national average for all schools and well above the average for selective schools. This level of performance has been sustained for the last three years. The trend in the results for science has been broadly in line with the national average for the last three years. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999 was very high compared to both the national average for all schools and selective schools. The level of performance has improved each year since the last inspection and the improvement continued in 2000. At A level, attainment in all three sciences in 1999 was well above the national average for all schools. The percentage of higher grades was above the national average for selective schools in physics but below in biology and chemistry.
79. In their lessons, students in all years are achieving very high standards compared to national averages for all schools. This was illustrated in a lively Year 9 lesson on pressure, where the students demonstrated their ability to do mental calculations using equations and discussed ideas of friction, volume and surface area with confidence. In a Year 11 lesson on ultrasound, students arriving somewhat lethargically were quickly motivated by very stimulating teaching and became very involved in the lesson asking relevant, probing questions. In a Year 12 A-level lesson on enzyme reactions, the teacher's excellent knowledge and enthusiasm enabled a stimulating discussion to take place. Students introduced ideas such as activation energy and the possible role of hydrogen bonding in the denaturing of enzymes into the discussion. In a Year 7 lesson on classifying materials, the teacher enabled students to learn and use a range of vocabulary such as electrical conductivity, malleability and flexibility. His very good question and answer technique enabled students to demonstrate their knowledge about graphs and to acquire new concepts, such as an independent variable. In all years, lessons are constructed to develop students' scientific skills. Students are enabled, through the marking of investigations and examination questions, to develop the skills necessary for coursework and examination success. Considering students' prior learning on entry to the school, their achievement is good.
80. The great majority of students are interested in science. In most lessons, teachers use a variety of methods to stimulate learning at a brisk pace and the students respond very well. Students are very articulate and numerate, and keep very good written records of the work they do. They respond very positively to questions and set about their work in a businesslike and safe manner.
81. The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was very good and led to very good learning. The quality in the sixth form and at Key Stage 3 was very good whilst that at Key Stage 4 was good. Students' high levels of literacy and command of basic numeracy skills, coupled with their desire to succeed, helped them to obtain maximum benefit from this teaching. The strengths of the teaching in the sixth form lay in the excellent subject knowledge of teachers in all three science subjects and their obvious interest in the subjects. The strengths at Key Stage 3 lay in the variety of methods used in the classroom and the opportunities for imaginative work. Apart from this, the teaching has many clear strengths which help students to learn: good understanding of the requirements of the National Curriculum and examination courses; excellent planning based on clearly laid-out schemes of work; very good collection and use of national and school data to track individual students; good classroom management with prompt starts to lessons and equipment/resources to hand; very high expectations from the teachers leading to an atmosphere conducive to

learning; very good classroom relationships. The few weaknesses observed that occasionally slowed the pace of learning include too much input by the teacher thus reducing the opportunity for students to take responsibility for their own learning, and a lack of appropriate intellectual challenge.

82. The department is well led and managed at all levels. The department monitors performance data and has a very good method of identifying and dealing with underachievement. The recent development of performance management has improved the consistency with which students' books are marked. Moral and social development is promoted well through very good relationships within classrooms, respect for each other's views, sensitivity to each other's needs, and discussions on the social and ethical implications of areas such as genetic engineering and the effects of the chemical industry.
83. The science department uses what resources it has well and is ably supported by an excellent team of technicians. However, its accommodation, though improved since the last inspection, is still unsatisfactory. Several laboratories are too small for the 30 students they have to accommodate and the laboratories are in almost constant use making it difficult for the technicians to do their work. Whilst science makes a contribution to ICT, it is restricted owing to lack of equipment. Whilst these inadequacies have not affected standards, they place the staff under extra stress. Overall, the improvement since the inspection has been good. All points raised have been tackled and standards have risen at Key Stages 3 and 4.

## **ART**

84. Standards in art are very high. Attainment in the 1999 GCSE examinations was well above the average for selective schools. In recent years, an increasing proportion of students have gained higher grades. In the most recent examinations, well over half of those entered attained A\* or A grades. This marks an improvement since the last inspection. The number of students entered for the examination has increased over recent years. Performance in art examinations is favourable when compared with other subjects. The evidence of students' work and lessons observed show that standards in current examination groups are also very high. The skills for independent learning are particularly well developed. Students use these skills creatively in extended research tasks, in their experiments with different materials and methods of working, and when embarking on their individual responses to questions. In a Year 11 class, the preparations for large-scale two- and three-dimensional work was carried out through annotated drawings and sketches, and extended further through the creative use of photocopiers, cameras and image manipulation on the computer. At all stages, in one-to-one and whole-class discussions, the teacher asked challenging questions pressing students to explain and question their decision-making. This resulted in very good learning.
85. Standards in the sixth form are high. In 1999 and in 2000, most students attained the higher grades. Good achievement and high standards have been maintained in recent years. Numbers on the course have risen and are currently higher than previous years. Students in A-level classes have portfolios of work that show a very high standard. Weekly life-drawing classes provide a rigorous drawing programme. All students completed a GCSE critical studies project in Year 12 and most achieved the highest A\* grade. This element of the course supports the development of core skills - particularly ICT and literacy – alongside an historical and critical dimensions of the arts and culture. The quality and standard is excellent, demonstrating imaginative and intellectually challenging ideas that are extended throughout the course.

86. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 show most students attaining standards that are well above average. The work that was seen in lessons by students in Key Stage 3 classes was above or frequently well above the level expected for their age. Students use their knowledge of art and artists' work sensitively and with understanding, as demonstrated by their drawings and paintings based on the cubist work of Picasso. The quality of three-dimensional and mixed-media work is lower than might be expected. As at the time of the last inspection, the balance of experiences is narrow and presents limited opportunities for students to develop a wider range of skills, knowledge and understanding.
87. In all years, the progress and achievements of students, including those with special educational needs, are good. Progress is particularly good in GCSE and A-level classes because students are given clear information about the criteria for assessment. It enables them to take the initiative and responsibility for their own learning rather than wait to be told what to do next. In a Year 10 class, the teacher closely questioned students to ensure they understood why the task was set and how it contributed to longer-term objectives for learning.
88. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning are very good. Subject expertise is excellent and makes rigorous intellectual demands, particularly of A-level students. The ability to draw from popular culture, music and classical art forms helps to create an environment that both inspires and motivates. Teaching and learning, although good, were less effective in Years 7, 8 and 9 than in other years. Large class sizes and inadequate resources limit achievement and the acquisition of some of the skills, knowledge and understanding identified within the National Curriculum. Most notably, there is little three-dimensional work and no computer-generated imagery. These are the main areas of weakness.
89. Overall, students' attitudes and interest, their behaviour and independent learning skills are very good and contribute significantly to the high standards achieved. The management of the department is good. Whilst some of the weaknesses in curriculum provision remain at Key Stage 3, there has been considerable improvement in examination results. The percentage of students gaining higher grades has increased and the breadth of the curriculum improved.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

90. By the end of Key Stage 3, attainment is above the national expectation for the majority of students. Most students have a good understanding of the design process and can produce several ideas in answer to a design problem. Discussion with students, class observation and looking at students' work indicate a sound basic knowledge of the concepts that underpin the design process. Through the main areas of graphics, electronics and mechanisms, students work with a range of materials to achieve high standards in the finished product. Critical analysis of their work takes place and they are prepared to modify their ideas. They show knowledge and understanding of the materials, components and tools they use. Some good work was seen in systems and control using sensors in switching circuits. Students do not work with textiles or food.
91. At the end of Key Stage 4 in 1999, the overall GCSE results were well above the national average for all schools but below average for selective schools. The results improved significantly in 2000. If the results of the full-course GCSE are taken separately, the A\*-C grades would compare more favourably with selective schools. The short-course results depress the overall standard. Many projects show thorough research and social considerations such as wheelchair access to commercial premises. Graphics work is of a high standard showing flair and imagination. Presentation is good and carefully considered. Effective use is made of information and communication technology. Much of this work is

done at home as access to computers within the department is limited. Students' mathematical ability supports their electronics studies.

92. In 1999 and 2000, too few A-level candidates took examinations to make valid comparisons with national averages. Work seen during the inspection was above average for all schools. Teaching is good. Teachers plan interesting and relevant projects that capture Key Stage 3 students' interest and systematically address the design process. In Year 7, for example, a project to make a cube puzzle taught isometric and orthographic drawing, card modelling and systems design. Extension activities were planned including more complex packaging of the cube using nets and the use of computers for design. Despite large classes, good class management, vigilant supervision and the enthusiasm of the students account for the high standards achieved. At Key Stage 4, the classes are still large. Teachers act as consultants and skills specialists as students work through projects that prepare them for examinations. Teachers encourage independence and many students have well-developed problem-solving skills. The good teaching is carried through to the sixth form where numbers taking A-level have increased. Assessment is comprehensive and students are aware of their targets. The recent change to more frequent assessment rather than at the end of each project will further assist students. The curriculum is sound but there is a need for more work on structures at Key Stage 3 and pneumatics as part of control. Whilst there is some computer-aided design and making, this is an area for further development. The department is short of information and communication technology resources.
93. Not all Key Stage 4 students take design and technology. The alternative courses offered are ICT or drama. In Year 11, one class takes drama as an alternative to design and technology, and in Year 10 one class takes drama and another ICT as an alternative. While both these courses include some elements of design and technology, it is not possible with either of them to cover all the programmes of study required by the National Curriculum.
94. At the last inspection, the graphics room was reported to be in need of refurbishment. The school has a major building project, very soon to be completed, which will incorporate this improvement. There has been no change in the provision of food and textiles as design and technology materials. The new National Curriculum orders for design and technology at Key Stage 3 require students to work with a range of contrasting materials including compliant materials and/or food.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

95. The teachers' assessments at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2000 were well above national averages, and the attainment of the current Year 9 students is also well above average. Students complete a great deal of work, and Year 7 students have very good map-work skills. There is some particularly high attainment as in the detailed, advanced work on variations in river flow over time. Occasionally, there are instances of work that lacks challenge for the students such as a rather general letter to the National River Authority, and a poster about mercury pollution that was not based on a good level of knowledge.
96. The GCSE results in 1999 were broadly average for selective schools. There was a marked improvement in the results in 2000 when 66% of students achieved A\* or A grades and, on average, students achieved better results in geography than their other subjects. Current GCSE standards are well above national averages. Students' work is detailed and thorough as in their case studies of population in China and Mauritius. Coursework is of a high standard, with clear analysis and conclusions. Some students make very good use of ICT in their coursework studies.

97. The A-level results in 1999 were average for selective schools, and the results in 2000 were similar. On average, students achieved better results in geography than in their other A-level subjects. Current standards are well above national averages. For example, students know the two main types of glacier and the processes of glacier movement. For their individual coursework, students cover a good range of topics including urban geography, biogeography and micro-climates. They use a wide variety of data collection methods, and their analyses are thorough and clear.
98. Students' attitudes to work and their behaviour are excellent. Together with the good quality of teaching, these contribute strongly to their good achievement. Students with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language achieve as well as their peers.
99. The overall quality of teaching is good, and lessons observed ranged from very good to satisfactory. A common strength of the teaching is teachers' very good subject knowledge that results in clear explanations, some advanced learning and clear answers to students' demanding questions. For example, in a GCSE lesson, students learnt a detailed classification of human migrations. There is usually a brisk, enthusiastic pace which ensures that much work is achieved, as in a sixth form lesson about the physical and human consequences of earthquakes. Classroom management is most effective and helps to secure a very good response from students. For instance, they asked many perceptive questions about plate tectonics in a Year 9 lesson. Teachers use some stimulating, demanding resources such as satellite images and newspaper articles. Teachers use questions effectively to check students' understanding and to systematically build students' understanding of, for example, the formation of and weather associated with anticyclones. In all lessons, there is a good emphasis on using specialist geographical vocabulary.
100. Occasional weaknesses seen in teaching included setting some tasks from the Key Stage 3 textbook that were too easy, learning objectives that were too general, and confusion over a particular teaching point because of a lack of adequate preparation. At A level, marking is thorough and makes clear how students can improve their work. At Key Stage 3, the quality of marking varies between classes. Some is thorough and detailed but some provides very few written comments.
101. Students have some opportunities to investigate for themselves in, for examples, enquiries about the Kobe earthquake and coastal protection. However, students have limited opportunities to ask their own geographical questions and to suggest appropriate sequences of investigation. There is a well-structured scheme of work and it will be important that this is updated as a result of information from assessment and evaluation. There are insufficient opportunities for fieldwork at Key Stage 3. There is no fieldwork teaching as part of the GCSE course. As the department is aware, insufficient use is made of ICT in the teaching of geography. Although some good activities have been planned, these have not been used because of the difficulty of access to the computer room. It is good that all students are issued with textbooks that are used for homework.
102. The department is very well managed and has made good progress since the previous inspection. Staff are very committed and hard working which is particularly commendable as they have important whole-school responsibilities. Standards at GCSE and A level have risen. Accommodation has improved a great deal and the necessary schemes of work have been written. Students now write in a wider range of forms, although there is scope for further improvement as much writing still consists of short factual pieces. A-level students have good opportunities for wider reading, and there is now a sixth-form study room. However, there is no planned use of the library in the schemes of work.

## HISTORY

103. In terms of national averages for all schools, standards are very high at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. They are average at A Level. At all stages in the school, students have a very good knowledge of historical facts. They are able to describe, often in considerable detail, the main events and personalities in the topics they are studying.
104. In the lessons seen during the inspection, Key Stage 3 students showed good understanding of chronology and, in response to probing questions, they made good connections between causes, events and consequences. Explanations were securely based on their knowledge. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, the students showed very good knowledge of the events leading up to the Battle of Hastings and were beginning to draw sensible conclusions. In general, however, students are not always confident in making use of historical sources to gain information or in analysing these to provide information about their provenance. They are not routinely asking when, by whom and for what purpose documents and other sources were produced. The quality of their written work is not as good as their oral work and they are not given enough opportunities to write at length. This means that, though their achievement is still satisfactory, it is not as good as it could be and not as good as most subjects.
105. The proportion of students gaining A\* to C grades at GCSE is very high. The work seen in Years 10 and 11 suggests that this will be maintained. However, the proportion of students gaining A\* and A grades is not as good as other subjects, and other selective schools nationally. Year 11 work shows very good factual knowledge and written work is usually well structured. The best coursework on the Vietnam War shows good sustained argument, and information is presented effectively in a range of appropriate ways, but not enough students are working at this level to gain A\* and A grades. Students are less skilled in using source materials critically in investigative work.
106. Attainment at A level is above average for selective schools in terms of the percentage pass rate, but below average overall in terms of the proportion of A and B grades. Subject knowledge is very good and higher-attaining students especially are able to draw on this in sustaining coherent lines of argument and in displaying a good grasp of complex and interrelated issues. This was very evident in an A-level lesson on China between 1949 and 1968 where the most-able students evaluated very effectively the relative strengths and weaknesses of the different leaders and power groups. Most students show similarly good levels of knowledge but do not use it to develop their arguments in enough detail or depth, and their essays tend to be too descriptive.
107. The teachers are enthusiastic about history, have very good subject knowledge and use it effectively. They assess and mark students' work regularly and monitor progress, although the marking tends to be for accuracy and does not give enough guidance on how students could improve their work. They employ resources well and more use is beginning to be made of ICT. Schemes of work give satisfactory guidance on content but do not give advice on teaching strategies or a range of suitable activities, which is a significant weakness. This is reflected in the difference between written and oral work, and in the students' relative weakness in handling evidence despite their knowledge.
108. The head of department and teaching staff have improved work in history since the last inspection and want to further raise standards. GCSE and A-level results are now closer to those for other subjects, and the quality of teaching is better. This gives the department a

secure basis on which to make further improvement, which is necessary if students' achievements are to be good rather than satisfactory.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

109. There was no full-course GCSE in the subject in 1999, but the standards of students taking a short course examination were high. There has been a generally improving trend in recent years and this has continued into 2000, with all students achieving A-C grades, but none reaching A\*. No students took an A-level examination in 1999 or 2000. Teachers assessed their students' standards as being very high at the end of Key Stage 3.
110. In lessons and from the scrutiny of students' previously completed work, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are consistently good and are very good for many students, who benefit from a taught course in each year. Students in Year 9 know how to use a range of applications, can integrate text and tables when presenting information, and can write a program to control a machine for selling railway tickets. Some show very high capability in designing procedures for investigating people's needs and preferences for a sports club, and in translating this information into a form suitable for processing in a database. Standards at the end of Key Stage 4 are high for those students who follow taught courses in the subject. Students have a good understanding of the process of analysing a problem and developing solutions, and most are able to write Internet pages, using an appropriate computer language. The capability of the most able is often demonstrated in the quality of organisation of their work in files on the computer and of their word-processed reports on their coursework projects. Although there are examples of high standards in individual pieces of subject-based work, the overall standard for the majority who do not follow ICT courses is lower than expectations because of insufficient opportunities to apply, consolidate and further develop their capability in a range of contexts across the curriculum. In the sixth form, standards are well above expectations for those following the AS-level computing course. The Year 12 students who recently embarked upon this course demonstrate knowledge and application of key concepts that is very good for their stage of study. Cross-curricular opportunities occur more naturally in the sixth form, so standards are in line with expectations for those not following the computing course. Achievement is good in the taught courses, because high standards are maintained in Key Stages 3 and 4 and further improved in the sixth form.
111. The quality of teaching is good overall and very good in the sixth form. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are very good in most lessons in Key Stage 3 and in all lessons in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. Good guidance is given on ensuring that capability is fully represented in examination performance. Lessons are introduced effectively so that students are clear about what they have to achieve and the relevance of their tasks. Support for individual work is diligent and highly effective, being based upon good knowledge of students and their individual needs. Good questioning provides opportunities for students to apply and reflect upon their developing capability, and identifies and addresses problems. Numeracy is often supported well when, for example, students use spreadsheets to calculate and analyse the school's football results. Literacy benefits when students develop and use their specialist vocabulary. Key Stage 4 students have good opportunities to practise their extended writing skills when developing and refining reports on their project work. Occasionally, teachers do not establish or make sufficient use of prior learning when, for example, not allowing Year 7 students to show things learned about spreadsheets during primary school.
112. Learning is generally good and is very good in the sixth form. It develops quickly and students apply their skills well. Attitudes make a considerable contribution in most lessons, with students working hard and with enthusiasm. They willingly support each other and, although calling upon teachers where necessary, they develop strategies to address their own problems. Failure to complete homework occasionally restricts progress in lessons, when time has to be spent upon aspects that should already have been completed. There is

occasional inattention, but this is usually due to students over-enthusiastically focusing upon their own work and thus missing guidance from the teacher.

113. Several improvements have been made since the previous inspection. A new computer room has dramatically improved the environment for teaching and learning, so that it is now much less overcrowded for the large teaching groups and allows teachers to support individuals more effectively. There is now technical support, which is shared with design and technology. The need for formal training is being addressed by the majority of staff recently embarking upon New Opportunities Fund training. Monitoring the success of this is at an early stage and the school needs to ensure that teachers will have access to adequate resources to apply their new skills if the impact is to be maximised. There has been a substantial improvement to opportunities in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form with the introduction of successful GCSE and A-level courses. A number of existing strengths have been maintained or further improved. However, overall improvement has been unsatisfactory because, while several improvements have been made, some key ones have not been addressed. The school continues to fail to meet statutory requirements in Key Stage 4, because of inadequate co-ordination of opportunities across the curriculum, and failure to systematically assess progress. The school's stock of computers remains insufficient to meet the demands of the curriculum. The deployment of the current stock, while serving the taught courses very well, fails to provide adequate access to other subjects. Although there is the intention to improve the situation, this has not yet been translated into detailed, costed, time-related plans.
114. Management of the taught courses is good, but overall the school's leadership and management of ICT is unsatisfactory because of failure to address key weaknesses. Capacity for improvement is good, however, because whole-school and departmental management share a general vision for the development of the role of ICT, which needs to be sharpened up into a clear development plan, and capable management at a departmental level has recently been well supported by being allocated more time to focus upon curricular development.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **French**

115. The standard of work of students currently in Year 9 is well above national expectations. Students use perfect, imperfect, future and present tenses well. In some lessons, they are very confident where French is used extensively both by the teacher and the students themselves. Standards are strongest in Year 7 where students reply to the teachers' fluent use of French with several sentences on topics such as the family or rooms in the house. Those students, who begin French as a second language in Year 8, also attain very high standards when compared with national expectations for this stage of the course.
116. GCSE results in 1999 were higher than the results reported for the last inspection. Students did better in French than in other subjects. The proportion gaining A\*-C grades was higher than the average for all selective schools, although results fell to just below the average for all selective schools against unconfirmed figures for 2000. The evidence of students' work and the lessons observed show that in Key Stage 4 attainment is well above national expectations. Students do best in lessons, such as the Year 10 lesson observed, where the teacher's high expectations, clear learning objectives, and choice of a telephone activity which appealed to their interests, resulted in high-level speaking skills. Standards are not as high as they should be in the Year 11 group containing the highest attainers because the newly appointed teacher has spent too long this term reworking structures and vocabulary previously covered.
117. A-level results for 1999 were below the national average results of all schools and selective schools. The proportion of students gaining the higher grades was significantly lower than



the national average. These results improved slightly in 2000. In current sixth form groups, attainment is in line with national expectations for this stage of the course. It is better in Year 12, where students have more opportunities to use the language because of the larger numbers taking the course. Attainment is weaker in Year 13 where students encountered difficulties when talking about a poem on bullfighting.

118. Students, including those with special educational needs, achieve well in Key Stages 3 and 4 and appropriately in the sixth form. Standards are soon well above average in Year 7, and students make good progress throughout Key Stages 3 and 4. They develop the skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing well. The exception to this is the highest-attaining group in Year 11 and in the sixth form. The progress of Year 13 students is restricted by their reticence and reluctance to speak in the foreign language.

### **German**

119. The standard of work of students currently in Year 9 is well above national expectations. Attainment is better in Year 9 where students are beginning to work in the past tense, and in Year 7 where they give opinions about the towns where they live. It is weaker in the Year 8 second language group where students could not recall simple structures taught two weeks previously and had difficulty understanding the teacher's use of German.
120. GCSE results have remained broadly similar to those reported for the last inspection. Although the proportion of students gaining A\*-C passes was lower than the average for selective schools in 1999, results for 2000 were higher with some particularly high results in the speaking examination. From analysis of work and observation of lessons, attainment at Key Stage 4 is well above national expectations. Students rise to teachers' very high expectations, extending and enhancing their work well. They have very well-developed listening and reading skills.
121. Only one student entered for A level in 1999, which means that comparison with national data is not significant. Results for 2000 included few higher grades. Attainment of students currently in the sixth form is in line with national expectations for this stage of the course. Students in Year 12 write fluently about themselves using a wide variety of vocabulary and structures. In Year 13, they have well-developed reading and listening skills, but speaking skills were weaker in the lesson observed where they used English to communicate with the teacher.
122. When compared to their earlier attainment, students, including those with special educational needs, achieve appropriately at Key Stage 3 and the sixth form, and well at Key Stage 4.
123. Overall, the teaching observed in modern foreign languages was good. In French, it ranged from excellent to satisfactory and, in German, from good to unsatisfactory. The best teaching was seen in French at Key Stage 3, where established routines, careful grammatical analysis of the work being presented, and clear learning objectives resulted in high standards and very good progress. A strength of the teaching in French at Key Stage 3 is teachers' ability to deliver the lessons in accessible French and to ensure that students communicate in French themselves. The main weakness is in German in the second language Year 8 group where the lack of clear learning objectives, structure and pace resulted in unsatisfactory progress. Students are provided with more opportunities to speak French than German at Key Stage 3.
124. As a result of the good teaching, learning is also good overall. Particularly good progress was made by students in Key Stage 3 French lessons. Students behave very well in language lessons but occasionally become restless because they have covered the work before. Literacy and numeracy skills are well developed. Teachers are training to use computers within language learning although they are not currently being used.

125. Since the last inspection, teaching has improved significantly. French and German are now used extensively in many classrooms. The newly appointed head of department gives clear educational direction for both subjects and there is shared commitment amongst teachers to improvement, which is already taking effect. Numbers taking French in the sixth form have increased dramatically. Opportunities to use dictionaries, read for pleasure, produce creative writing and take part in more extended written activities are now provided more regularly, and foreign language assistants have been appointed for both languages. There has been little monitoring and evaluation of teaching to ensure that the very good practice seen in Key Stage 3 French is shared across all year groups and languages. Although schemes of work are in place, they are not yet being used, which is why new teachers are not sure of what has been covered previously. Assessment procedures are still unsatisfactory, and there is inadequate tracking of students' performance and identification of the very best linguists as they move through the school. This means that standards are not as high as they could be, particularly at A level. The issue raised about setting arrangements at Key Stage 4 has not been addressed. Students who have studied a language for two years and those who have had three years of study are in the same sets, ignoring the breadth of knowledge acquired in three years. At A level, timetabling difficulties prevent some students from having their full time entitlement with other members of the group and there are often two language lessons on the same day, which means that students do not have regular access to language learning over the week. The development plan lacks the rigour to ensure that this department moves forward as it should.

## MUSIC

126. Results since the school introduced GCSE music four years ago have been very high in comparison with the national average for all schools and for grammar schools. All students between 1997 and 1999 gained A\* to C grades. The results fell in 2000, when 78% achieved higher grades. The subject has grown annually in popularity. In 1997, there were five candidates. In the Year 10 set this year, there are 28 students. A small A-level group has been established in the current Year 12.

127. Assessment of students' attainment, carried out by the school at the end of Year 9, indicates a substantial proportion of students working beyond the expected level. This was confirmed during the inspection. At the end of Year 9, students are skilled at instrumental recognition. They have an assured working knowledge of the National Curriculum elements of music. They have listened to a good range of music. Many compose very securely, using programmable keyboards. For example, there was a high level of inventiveness in 12-bar blues pieces composed in Year 9, and standards of performance were high. Students' attainment in lessons in Key Stage 4 is well above average. In Year 11, students compose very fluently using computers. They layer pieces with technical assurance and have a very good grasp of style. Performing is very good by most students. They have a good range of technical and theoretical knowledge.

128. Students' achievement varied from satisfactory to good in lessons observed in Key Stage 3. In Year 7, many could identify the principal instruments in four sections from 'Carnival of the Animals', despite the excessive length of the excerpt which taxed their powers of recall too much. In Year 8, they showed a good understanding of the contrasting characters of the three themes in 'Dawn' from 'Peter Grimes', but had insufficient opportunity to develop expressive language by evaluating it orally. Students in Year 10 have good listening skills. They can identify the historical period from which pieces of music come and have a good knowledge of styles and important representative composers. The students, who are at an early stage in the GCSE course, quickly confirmed their knowledge of the layout of a full orchestral score. They were able to follow the score, analyse the means by which the composer achieved his effects, and identify technicalities, such as augmentation and

diminution. In Year 11, students were developing more advanced listening skills, identifying subtleties of orchestration and the technical means by which Weber achieved expressive effects in the overture, 'Der Freischütz'. In Year 12, students showed their good understanding of baroque style by identifying the hallmarks of Bach's style in the Fourth Brandenburg Concerto.

129. Teaching is good in Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4 and Year 12, it is very good, and sometimes excellent. The teaching is enthusiastic and attracts a good response from students. Lessons have clear objectives for which the appropriate resources are readily available and carefully organised. Clear instructions help the students to work efficiently from the start. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. Time is well organised. Good discipline is easily maintained. Assessment of work in progress around the class is very good. This leads to helpful advice from the teacher and very good progress from students. However, the teaching of musical appreciation in Key Stage 3 concentrated too much on technicalities, which sometimes reduced the effectiveness of the activity as a musical experience. Some assessment procedures are too drawn out, especially where the class acts as an audience for the majority of a lesson. In Key Stage 4 and Year 12, the very high standard of teaching enabled the students to make very good progress. All advice is authoritative and very concisely expressed.
130. Music has undergone a remarkable transformation from the unsatisfactory state described in the previous inspection report. The high standards of academic success at GCSE level and the quality of extracurricular provision have become a source of considerable prestige to the school. Music now makes a significant contribution to the social and creative lives of a considerable and continually growing number of students. Day-to-day organisation is excellent. Instrumental teaching is well managed, and the direction of the varied extracurricular activities is marked by both professionalism and good humour. However, the line-management system is ineffectual, leaving the subject to develop too much in isolation. There are too few opportunities for in-service training in connection with teaching in Key Stage 3. The new accommodation for the subject is attractive but the main teaching room is cramped and affects students' progress in collaborative work where there are large classes in the lower school and for GCSE. To develop further, in Key Stage 3, the department should streamline formal assessment procedures, and refine methods for teaching musical appreciation.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

131. GCSE results in physical education have been improving and, in 1999, they were significantly above the national average for all schools and above those for selective schools. In 2000, the proportion of students gaining A\* grades increased. At A level, all students passed in 1999 and 2000, and results were average for selective schools.
132. The evidence of the students' work and the lessons observed show that the attainment of students in Years 10 and 11 is good. Several students in a Year 10 swimming lesson applied advanced skills and techniques in a range of strokes. All students possessed the relevant skills to compete successfully while having a good knowledge and understanding of the basic principles of both water safety and successful stroke improvement. In a Year 11 basketball lesson, all students in a mixed-ability group had a sound mastery of all basic skills and could apply them in a competitive match situation. Several students in this group had developed a very high level of skill and tactical awareness. The ability to plan and evaluate is rarely apparent in activities at this key stage. Opportunities are also limited at this key stage for students to either take responsibility or display initiative in their lessons. Some very good work was being done, however, in Year 9 where students developed their own training

programme in swimming, while at the same time developing their skills in the observation and analysis of performance.

133. In 2000, the results of teacher assessments indicate that the vast majority of students at the end of Year 9 achieved at or beyond national expectations. Many Key Stage 3 students are able to apply the techniques, skills and competition rules to several aspects of the physical education curriculum, including rugby, swimming and football. Basic skills are sound and provide a platform for future development. In swimming, most students are at least competent in basic stroke technique for the three major strokes and many students display very good ability. Most students are comfortable competing in the pool and are anxious to improve their performance. Basic skills in football are good and many students display very sophisticated control and passing skills.
134. Students' learning was good in most Key Stage 3 lessons, and was never less than satisfactory. Students are encouraged to develop not only skills but also a good understanding of the techniques and rules. An example of good progress for students was observed in a Year 7 football lesson, where more-able students consolidated basic skills and learnt fairly advanced dribbling and control skills, which they applied to the game situation. The progress of students in observing and evaluating their own performance and the performance of others is inconsistent at both key stages.
135. At Key Stage 4, learning was satisfactory. Good learning was observed in a sixth form A-level theory lesson where students developed an understanding of the basic principles of learning theories and were beginning to understand how these could be applied to the acquisition of skills in sports. Although the range of extracurricular activities is limited, a very impressive number of students are involved in practices and fixtures with other schools, providing many opportunities for them to extend and develop their skills.
136. The quality of teaching is good. A very good lesson on general stroke improvement in swimming was observed in Year 7 where the development of observational skills was encouraged and students were able not only to effectively develop skills of observation and analysis but to use these to effect improvements in performance. There is clear teaching which includes good question-and-answer sessions. Thorough planning, incorporating varied teaching strategies and an appropriate sequence of activities, is a feature of many lessons. Discipline and class management are always good. Day-to-day assessment of performance during lessons is regularly used to enhance teaching and learning, but the involvement of students in this assessment to help set targets for improvement has not been developed. Marking of work for both GCSE and A-level students does not clearly identify areas for improvement. Although there are many opportunities for students to work independently and collaboratively at both key stages, opportunities for students to take responsibility and to undertake different roles, such as coach or official, are limited.
137. At Key Stage 4, the range of activities does not provide a sound preparation for post-16 leisure. Schemes of work for both key stages are developing and are fairly good working documents, though they do not identify activities or strategies to challenge the most able. The organisation of the curriculum restricts the effectiveness of learning at times. When the whole of Year 8 are timetabled for games at the same time, not only are non-specialist staff being inappropriately used but unnecessary time is being used in transporting students to the playing field. Opportunities for the use of information and communication technology are being missed, especially in the GCSE and A-level courses.
138. Organisation and leadership of the department are good in many respects. Staff are good role models and are very committed. The faculty structure is not supporting the development of the department. Development planning is vague, and does not include detail on how to achieve priorities, specific responsibilities or timescale. Job descriptions are not being used

to assist in the necessary delegation of responsibilities in the department. Lack of appropriate accommodation is a significant factor in restricting the range of activities available to students. There has been sound progress in areas identified in the last inspection report including improved GCSE results and an improvement in the quality of learning at Key Stage 3. However, there is still a lack of variety in activities taught and a limitation on choice. In-service training requirements are still not specified clearly enough.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

139. In the GCSE short-course examination introduced in 1998, results have been very high. In 2000, 54 of 55 candidates achieved grades A\* to C and, in 1999, 66 out of 68 achieved the higher grades. The evidence of students' previously completed work and the lessons observed shows that attainment by students on either the examination or the non-examination course is well above average. Students have a strong grasp of difficult concepts, such as 'the nature of God'. They use sources material very carefully. There is a high standard of discussion; students speak with candour and thoughtfulness on religious and moral issues. They gain a good grasp of technical language, such as 'fundamentalism' and 'immanence'.
140. Students' good understanding of technical vocabulary is also a strong feature by the end of Year 9, where attainment is well above the expectations of the local Agreed Syllabus. Students have a thorough knowledge of many aspects of Christianity and other principal world religions. They are familiar with the symbolism associated with rites and ceremonies in these religions. They also have a very good understanding of moral issues, such as euthanasia and capital punishment. Note taking is of a high standard. Standards of presentation throughout the subject are very good. Students' very good oral abilities were well demonstrated when they discussed how circumstances could affect attitudes to the birth of a baby.
141. Students make very good progress in relation to their abilities through Key Stage 3. Many topics throughout the subject are approached by considering the language used and its derivations. This helps them to achieve precise knowledge and understanding. In Year 7, students understand the difference between private and public worship. They understand prayer as a means of communication. They know the principal events in the life of Jesus. Students use a good range of methods to present topics, such as newspaper articles on the Nativity, and the story of Abraham and Isaac. In Year 8, students consider their own values and what they believe in. This elicits imaginative personal writing. They are well informed about attitudes to religion in major faiths, and compared beliefs amongst themselves by carrying out a class survey. Students receive and understand substantial information on places of worship in various religions. They know of the symbolism of Jewish festivals, particularly the Feast of the Passover. While students make very good progress overall in Key Stage 4, it can vary. In a lesson observed, several students had not done their homework adequately for a test. However, in the lesson, they showed very perceptive reactions to the idea that God is present everywhere - 'In the beauty of a mountain and in Auschwitz?'
142. Teaching is very good in both key stages. Occasionally, it is excellent. The teachers are very knowledgeable. They display a wide-ranging scholarship and are able not only to expound what they wish to say, but also to answer students' often very difficult questions. They have high expectations of students. One class was taken sternly to task when some students had failed to reach the required standard. Lessons are very carefully planned and proceed at a very good pace. A good range of activities, including notetaking, discussion, input from the teachers and independent working, ensures that students are continually engrossed. Planning indicates a good range of teaching methods, including drama, discussion,

presentations by students and artwork. Creative activities, such as updating the Parable of the Good Samaritan or writing a card in connection with Hindu birth rites elicit imaginative responses from students. Marking is thorough and regular, with good advice for improvement. There is no formal use of computers in religious education, but students sometimes use them to good effect for researching and presenting work.

143. The schemes of work are appropriately challenging for the abilities of the students. Religious education is provided for the sixth form by an annual one-day conference and the upper sixth general studies programme, which both cover a variety of religious and moral topics. An outline of this indicates that it provides a substantial and worthwhile experience for students, although the time allocation is below that envisaged in the local Agreed Syllabus. Religious education is very well organised but the department is relatively isolated because the line-management process is ineffective. Standards in religious education have risen significantly since the previous inspection. The quality of provision has shown very good improvement. All issues raised in the previous report have been successfully resolved. Opportunities should be created for extending the use of computers in religious education.

## **BUSINESS STUDIES AND ECONOMICS**

144. Standards in business studies are above national averages for selective schools at GCSE. In general, the students achieve better results than in their other GCSE subjects, which suggests good achievement for these students. Results at A level were average for selective schools in 1999 but not as good in 2000. The achievement of the current students is good. In economics at A level, the percentage pass rate is below national averages for all and selective schools, and students do not achieve as well in this subject as they do in others.
145. The teaching of business studies is good and is a major factor in the standards students are achieving. At both GCSE and A level, expectations are high. The aims for lessons are always clearly explained at the start and are referred to during the lesson and in the review at the end. Students are very clear about what they have learnt. The presentation is lively and knowledgeable. The students are encouraged to question and raise issues of their own which they do confidently and perceptively. The work is closely related to the real business world with up-to-date examples drawn from a variety of businesses. A Year 10 lesson showed that students had made good progress in understanding the different types of businesses and the Year 12 presentations showed good analysis of major businesses. ICT is successfully used in business studies, with access to information via the Internet being particularly useful. There is scope to develop this still further. In addition to work in class, a large number of students are able to gain a real insight into the business world through taking part in work experience, Young Enterprise and the Challenge of Management conferences.
146. It was not possible to observe any teaching in economics as the school has been without a specialist teacher this term. The school has tried hard to remedy this but a permanent teacher is not available until the end of October. The lack of specialist teaching is having a detrimental effect. Year 13 students are not as confident about what they know, understand and can do in economics as they are about other subjects. Their files are also not as detailed as they might be. This lack of confidence may well take some time to restore.
147. The management of business studies and economics is currently less than satisfactory. There is no head of department, and the work set for economics is overseen by the head of sixth and the business studies teacher, but they have limited time in which to help students. Schemes of work in business studies and economics do not provide enough guidance for

staff on suitable teaching approaches, resources or expectations for attainment. However, the teacher who is temporarily in charge of the area is aware of the deficiencies and has already produced a good scheme of work for the new AS-level business studies course in Year 12.

## **DRAMA**

148. Drama is a new subject in the school since the last inspection. GCSE drama will be taken for the first time by Year 11 in 2001.
149. In lessons, the attainment of 14 year olds is above the national expectation for this age. Students know and can use many dramatic techniques. They invent convincing and clearly worked out roles in situations which they create individually and in groups. They are confident when evaluating their own work and this is the result of clear assessment criteria and sensitive teacher criticism and praise. By the age of 16, students are achieving above-average standards. They demonstrate a sound understanding of the basic techniques of drama and higher-attaining students are effective at creating humorous parodies on well-known events. Work based on Brecht's 'Fear and Misery of the Third Reich' enabled Year 10 students to explore difficult issues of morality in race and religion. Students bring to their performances good preparation, personal experiences and often information drawn from the Internet at home.
150. Students make good progress as they move through the school. In Year 7, they work on short sequences and tableaux on character and behaviour in different situations. In Year 9, dramatic awareness becomes more sophisticated and students work on abstract concepts expressing feelings and moods. Students working towards GCSE in Years 10 and 11 willingly tackle challenging texts and demonstrate considerable imagination through the exploration of a subject of their choice.
151. Students' attitudes to drama are very good and their behaviour is excellent. They are keen to do well and this supports the good progress they make. They enjoy the practical aspect of the subject. They work well in groups and enjoy the challenge of planning and presenting an idea. They are organised, disciplined and focused on their work.
152. The overall quality of teaching is good. Lesson planning, which includes assessment, is effective and students know how they are progressing. The teachers manage the students well through the provision of a range of activities in each lesson which keeps interest alive. In the best teaching, students are allowed to develop their ideas, and independence with an element of daring is encouraged. When lessons are too tightly controlled or directed, the potential for very challenging work is lost.
153. A newly written scheme of work includes the study of theatre – Greek, Comedia dell'Arte, slapstick and melodrama – and this is becoming more finely tuned as it is tried and evaluated. However, one lesson a fortnight in Years 7, 8 and 9 is too limited an amount of time for very good progress to take place. Accommodation for drama is unsatisfactory. There is no specific space allocated for teaching and the use of the hall, gym and a classroom with desks is too restricting for practical lessons. There is no storage for props, and the lighting and sound equipment for GCSE drama is inadequate and limits teaching and learning. The school's plans for the development of its accommodation include provision for drama with a performance space, but the governing body has not so far received the necessary support to implement these plans.
154. The management of the department is sound. Much enthusiasm has gone into building up the subject over the last few years so that it is now a popular GCSE option. Annual

productions and the inter-house junior competition started last year offer good opportunities for students' social development and are of benefit to the school and the community. The musical production every other year with a nearby girls' school creates good links between the schools and across the three subjects of music, art and drama. However, there is a serious lack of any timescale in the school plan for drama in the provision of essential major resources and accommodation. It is therefore unclear how drama can develop satisfactorily without a detailed, budgeted plan.