

# INSPECTION REPORT

## TIFFIN SCHOOL

Kingston-upon-Thames

LEA area: Kingston-upon-Thames

Unique reference number: 102605

Headteacher: Dr A M Dempsey

Reporting inspector: Mr W Baxendale  
2928

Dates of inspection: 30<sup>th</sup> September – 4<sup>th</sup> October 2002

Inspection number: 249564

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Grammar (selective)

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18 years

Gender of pupils: Boys

School address: Queen Elizabeth Road  
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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr M C Taylor

Date of previous inspection: November 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities (sixth form)	Responsibilities (sixth form)
2928	Mr W Baxendale	Registered inspector		The school's results and students' achievements How well are students taught?
9799	Ms S Smith	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents and students?
30941	Mr K Brammer	Team inspector	Theatre studies	
4359	Ms W Hola	Team inspector	Mathematics	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students? How well is the school led and managed?
30046	Mr R Parker	Team inspector	English	
10905	Mr A Brewerton	Team inspector	Chemistry Physics	
19915	Ms P Hooton	Team inspector	History	
14573	Mr H Wareing	Team inspector	Geography	
14851	Mr G Laws	Team inspector	French German	
15576	Mr D Nebesnuick	Team inspector	Business studies	
21954	Mr T Chipp	Team inspector	Art and design	
13217	Mr M Butterworth	Team inspector	Physical education	
2652	Mr R Lomas	Team inspector	Latin	
15163	Mr E Deeson	Team inspector	Design and technology	
11975	Ms T McIntosh-Clark	Team inspector	Music	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Tiffin is a selective grammar school for boys in Kingston-upon-Thames; its foundation is of long standing. The roll of 1063 is about average for secondary schools nationally, but it includes an above-average sized sixth form of 341 students. The school is very popular; annually, it receives around 1,200 applications for the 140 available places. Very nearly all 16-year-olds continue into the sixth form and around 40 more join the sixth form each year from other schools. On entry, the pupils' and sixth form students' attainment is very high compared with the national average. The school's population is a reflection of the complexity of many urban societies; pupils and students from several minority ethnic backgrounds make up not quite half of the number on roll; this proportion is well above that found in the local community. About 20 per cent of the pupils have English as an additional language, although none are beginners. The school has identified just over two per cent of the pupils as having special educational needs, much lower than the national average. A very small proportion is eligible for a free school meal. The school is well into the process of applying for performing arts specialist status.

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

This is an outstanding, heavily over-subscribed school in which pupils and students improve well on the high standards they already have when they start as eleven-year-olds. They benefit from many, often-inspirational learning experiences in lessons and in an exceptional range of in- and out-of-school enrichment activity. Hard work and play pervade school life and create a very positive climate for learning. Complementing the excellent leadership and vision of the headteacher, the governors hold strongly to account a school that provides good value for money with a very good, cost-effective sixth form.

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

- An excellent uniformity of purpose helps to sustain very high attainment.
- Excellent personal development, arising from strong traditions of very high expectations and tolerance, produces mature and responsible young adults.
- Very good teaching and learning help the pupils to make good progress.
- The very good leadership is willing to take risks; it moves the school forward on many fronts.

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

- Pupils are not inspired to achieve as highly in English and modern foreign languages as they are in other subjects.
- There is still ample scope to improve the range of learning activities in lessons, particularly in the use of and expertise in (information and communication technology (ICT)).

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

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

The main recommendations of the previous, November 1996, inspection report have been tackled seriously and good progress made. Although there is still room for further improvement in the use of ICT, teaching uses a wider range of methods to help learning. Pupils and students benefit from a much-improved analysis of their performance and regularly set and checked targets are now helping to raise standards. The influence of the senior management team is greater and the monitoring of teaching and learning is now very good. Standards have risen year-on-year, as a result.

## STANDARDS

The table shows the standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 11 and sixth form students at the end of Year 13 based on average point scores in GCSE and A-level/A/S-level examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	A*	A*	A*	A
A-levels/A/S-levels	A	A	A	A

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

Competitive entry selections produce, each year, pupils of similar, high attainment. Some of the pupils with English as an additional language have lower standards in English, but because the school acts effectively to help them to improve, there are no discernible differences on ethnic grounds in the GCSE results of 16-year-olds. Similarly, the pupils with special educational needs achieve well.

Results of national tests for 14-year-olds and of GCSE examinations are very high; they have improved, year-on-year, since the previous inspection and are consistently in the top five per cent nationally for boys. In the 2001 national tests for 14-year-olds, well over half the pupils reached standards in English, mathematics and science that equated with good GCSE passes, very high compared with the national expectation. The pupils do best in mathematics and science, but English results are improving at a faster rate. Compared with all grammar schools, the 2001 results were well above average in mathematics and English and very high in science; standards rose in 2002, but there are no national comparisons available. Considering these results, the school is aware of the illogical two-year wait to take GCSEs and is starting to make alternative arrangements, for example in chemistry, with courses to A/S level starting in Year 10.

GCSE results in 2001 were very high compared with all other schools, and with grammar schools, for the percentages obtaining five, or more, higher-grade passes (almost 60 per cent were A\*/A passes). Average point scores were slightly lower, being in the well above average category, compared with grammar schools in 2001. Over four years, measures taken to set the pupils clear targets to aim at, successful training to improve the quality of teaching and learning and better evaluation of how the school is doing, have helped to raise GCSE average point scores more rapidly than the national trend of improvement. Reflecting the school's demanding targets for improvement, GCSE results also rose in 2002, but there are no national comparisons available.

Achievement is good. The pupils make good progress throughout, because they meet the school's expectations of hard work. The pupils write and speak particularly well. They are very good listeners, with very good understanding. Many pupils' writing is exceptionally good. By the age of 14 they communicate fluently and argue very well, many targeting different readerships and audiences at sophisticated levels. Others, a few, find the mechanics of writing hard and the quality of their work changes from subject to subject, in line with their motivation. Standards in mathematics and the sciences are also often very high. Standards in all other subjects are at least well above average, although those in modern foreign languages are not as high as might be expected. Only around the national average proportions study two languages and the average GCSE point scores in 2001 were lower than in other subjects in both French and German. The pupils' best results are in mathematics, chemistry, physics, biology, history, geography and Latin. They do less well in English, language and literature.

Average point scores in the sixth form A-level examinations in 2001 were very high compared with boys nationally and well above average compared with boys and girls combined. Results again rose in 2002. The comparisons are depressed, to an extent, because of a policy of entering candidates for only three subjects at A2 level, preferring to promote the boys' personal development through participation in

cultural, social and sporting activities. As a result, the students are very well prepared for higher education.

### **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Over 80 per cent of observed lessons reported at least very good, often-excellent attitudes, which were confirmed in interviews with pupils. The pupils' application and close interest in learning help them to make good progress.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. There are low levels of temporary exclusion and very good standards of behaviour throughout. Racial incidents and bullying are very rare and treated very seriously by the school, although a few parents perceive inconsistency in the way the school communicates results of actions taken.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. The outstanding range of enrichment activities helps the pupils rapidly to become very mature, highly communicative and sensitive, tolerant young persons. Pupils, students and staff collaborate particularly well.
Attendance	Very good. Improved in the last year to 96.7 per cent and no unauthorised absences. The pupils really enjoy coming to school, although, for a few, punctuality is a problem.

### **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	<b>Years 7 – 9</b>	<b>Years 10 – 11</b>	<b>Years 12 – 13</b>
Quality of teaching	Good	Very good	Very good

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

The quality of both teaching and learning is very good; it improves from stage to stage. Following the recommendations of the previous inspection, the school has given much attention to improving the ways pupils are able to learn. The results show in rising standards, although there is still room for further refinement to reduce the amounts of time teachers spend talking to rather than with pupils or providing challenges to which the pupils have to rise themselves. Teachers and pupils work very hard and the very good quality of learning is reflected in the very positive relationships that abound in nearly all lessons and also in the excellent enrichment activity programme. Special educational needs co-ordination has improved provision very well; pupils with identified special needs learn well and are more easily able to keep up. Because good teaching helps to raise their literacy skills, those who have English as an additional language also reach standards that equate with those of the rest of the school.

Some of the best teaching is in mathematics where, as a result, standards are also among the highest. Teaching and learning are also particularly good in drama, music, Latin and art and design. There is no subject in which teaching and learning are unsatisfactory, although the quality of teaching in modern foreign languages does not match fully that found in other subjects.

The pupils are avid learners. Learning is best in lessons that require them to be actively involved and stimulated by the range and nature of aids to learning such as visuals, video and audio sources. The pupils respond very well to opportunities to come up with solutions from discussions in small groups. They learn well when the theme is set against educational visits, which are very frequent. The pupils' listening skills are very good and they know how to learn, using the learning resources centre particularly well. However, although there are examples of good personal use of computers, ICT is not

widely enough used to help the pupils to learn. On the rare occasion, in French and ICT particularly, when teaching fails to enthuse, the pupils do not learn satisfactorily.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The governors provide a curriculum that fulfils the school's aims very well. Opportunities for 11- to 16-year-olds to learn are found in a broad range of subjects, complemented by an excellent range of very well supported enrichment activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The school now identifies pupils with specific learning needs and provides well, within its means, so that they are not disadvantaged: they make good progress.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. Analyses of competence show that numerous pupils start school needing extra assistance with English. Measures to help them improve are so successful that there is no discernible difference in their performance by the time they take GCSEs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent. Lessons, which often stimulate broader interest, for example music, cultural visits, and the excellent enrichment activity programme of sport, music and theatre, produce mature, eloquent, interesting young men.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The pupils are more and more aware of how well they are doing and how to improve. Their participation in house and school activities is outstanding. Health and safety issues are taken very seriously and child protection measures are good.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher's excellent leadership skills give the school its sense of common purpose. Very well supported by his senior team, he has set up very effective systems that have helped standards rise and extended the outstanding learning experience for pupils and students alike. Most middle managers play a very good part in improving standards, but there are weaknesses in English, as the department does not pull closely enough together.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. The governors know the school very well, provide excellent critical scrutiny of its running and first-hand help with some aspects of its organisation, including important health and safety matters. They fulfil their statutory duties in all respects, except satisfactory provision of religious education in the sixth form.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. A very good performance management system is complemented by a very full programme of evaluation of teaching and learning and a very thorough analysis of how the pupils and students perform in examinations, with action taken where needed.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The carefully managed budget balances and the principles commonly used to make sure expenditure brings best value are

	meticulously respected. The school uses finances dedicated to specific purposes very well.
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## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The ways the school gets their sons to work very hard and to do their best.</li><li>• The interesting range of enrichment activities that help learning outside lessons.</li><li>• Their sons like school.</li><li>• The ways the school is led and managed.</li><li>• The school is helping their sons to become mature and responsible.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communications - some feel the school does not work closely enough with them.</li><li>• The information on how well their sons are doing.</li></ul>

The inspectors agree fully with the parents on the many very positive features that pervade their sons' education. The enrichment activities and the breadth of learning experiences are outstanding. The school more than complies with the requirements on the provision of information to parents by providing three written reports per year. There are, however, some instances where communications with parents are not fully satisfactory and the procedures should be re-evaluated.

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

There are 341 students in the sixth form, all boys, with 172 in Year 12 and 169 in Year 13. The sixth form is much larger than average; it has grown steadily in recent years. In September 2002, 93 per cent of the Year 11 students stayed into the sixth form and 42 extra students joined from 120 applicants. Attainment on entry into the sixth form is very high. Students are normally required to have at least six GCSE grades A\*-B, including four at grade A. There are seven students with special educational needs, none of whom has a statement. Students come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds with roughly half from a white British background. The curriculum comprises A-level courses, a personal social and health education programme, general studies and a sports programme. Some aspects of the general studies programme are run jointly with The Tiffin Girls' School nearby. Sport, drama and music are high profile areas in the life of the sixth form, as they are in the rest of the school.

### **HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS**

The sixth form is very effective and meets very well the needs and aspirations of its higher attaining students. The overall quality of provision is very good, taking into account both the timetabled courses and the many enrichment activities organised by enthusiastic and committed teachers and students. This blend of curricular and enrichment activity, combined with the range of responsibilities that many students undertake, enables them to experience a broad range of interests. Teaching and learning are very good; teachers have extremely high expectations of their students who work with interest and application. Standards are very high and rising. Students achieve well. Their personal development and relationships are excellent. Sixth form students contribute greatly to the life of the school as a whole and are excellent role models for younger pupils, providing regular support for them. They are extremely well prepared for their next stage in work or learning; a very high proportion goes on to higher education. The leadership provided by many senior members of staff and also that of heads of department is very good overall. The school is keeping sixth form provision under review in the light of national changes to maintain its successful, highly-regarded level.

#### **Strengths**

- Students' attainment is very high compared to all maintained schools.
- Students make good progress because of very high quality teaching and also through their own intellectual, physical or creative efforts.
- The timetabled curriculum is enriched by a wide range of extra activities provided through the commitment and enthusiasm of teachers and students; this provision contributes enormously to students' academic and personal development.
- The very good leadership and management provided by many members of staff are focused on continued improvement.
- Relationships are excellent and based on mutual courtesy and respect.

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

- The consistency with which the tutorial programme (currently undertaken in form time and in tutorial periods) is conducted.
- ICT is not used widely enough to support independent and collaborative learning.

In addition,

- The school should continue to refine the general studies programme, to complement the A-level studies and to ensure sufficient coverage of religious education.

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

## THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Art and design	<b>Very good.</b> A-level results in 2001 were well above the national average. The quality of teaching is very good with a strong emphasis on developing students' individual skills.
Business studies	<b>Good.</b> Results were well above average in 2001. Students are achieving well as a result of good teaching.
Chemistry	<b>Very good.</b> Examination results are well above average. Teaching is very good and the standard of work seen in lessons is also well above average.
Design and technology	<b>Good.</b> Students achieve very high standards in A-level. They are very well supported by caring, hardworking teachers in a department that is well led and managed. The students' understanding of the nature of design and technology is a particular strength.
English	<b>Good.</b> Standards are very high. English is taught well and students make satisfactory progress from the very high standards achieved previously. A new team of teachers is beginning to develop more challenging ways of working for all students.
French	<b>Good.</b> Examination results are above average. Students use a wide range of vocabulary and grammatical constructions. Speaking and writing skills are generally well developed, benefiting from teachers' insistence on accuracy.
German	<b>Satisfactory.</b> Standards of work seen in Year 13 are a little above average. There were no entries for the A-level examination in 2001. Written work often contains fundamental errors.
Geography	<b>Very good.</b> Examination results are well above average. Teaching is good overall and much of it is very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge, are enthusiastic and develop independent learning in their students. ICT is now used extensively in independent research.
History	<b>Very good.</b> Very good leadership has led to rising standards that are now well above the national average. Teaching and learning are good. Students are skilful in using their knowledge of events across different historical periods.
Latin	<b>Very good.</b> Standards are very high. The great majority of teaching is very good or excellent. Students are highly motivated, reflective and self-directed learners.
Mathematics	<b>Very good.</b> Standards are very high. Mathematics is a very popular A-level course. Teaching is very good overall, conveying an enthusiasm for

	the subject. Methodical, rigorous assessment raises standards.
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Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Music	<b>Very good.</b> Examination results are consistently well above average. Teaching and learning are very good and the quality and range of enrichment activities are outstanding.
Physical education	<b>Very good.</b> Students make very good progress on A-level courses and examination results are very good. Teaching is very good and appropriate emphasis is placed on students' independent learning.
Physics	<b>Very good.</b> Examination results are well above average. Teaching is very good and the standard of work seen in lessons is very good.
Theatre studies	<b>Excellent.</b> Standards are well above average because of outstanding and inspirational teaching, an impressive range of enrichment opportunities and the commitment and positive attitude of the students.

#### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very good. Sixth form students are very well cared for and value the support they receive. Procedures for assessing their needs and providing guidance are very good overall, although some of the individual targets set for them are not sufficiently specific to be of real help.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very good. The school's ethos and expectations of high academic success and personal development are clearly stated and understood. Examination results are carefully analysed and steps taken to maintain or raise high standards. Staff work in effective partnership with each other and students to ensure that the quality of work is high and that educational provision is constantly reviewed to allow students to develop fully. Provision for religious education is limited. Resources are generally adequate but ICT is not used as fully as might be expected for teaching and learning. Accommodation is mostly adequate.

#### STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

What students like about the sixth form	What they feel could be improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information about courses of study</li> <li>• Support in settling in to the sixth form</li> <li>• The quality of teaching and accessibility of teachers</li> <li>• The range of enrichment activities</li> <li>• They enjoy coming to school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The assessment of their work and information about progress</li> <li>• The support and guidance they receive</li> <li>• The extent to which the school listens to their views</li> </ul>

Students are very positive about their school. Inspectors agree with some of their concerns, but not all. They consider that the quality of assessment is very good overall. There are, however, inconsistencies in the evaluation of students' work in end-of-year reports and these restrict students' understanding of where they should focus their efforts to raise the standards they achieve. Although support and guidance offered by the school are very good, opportunities provided through tutor periods are not always used well. Issues of particular concern to students relate to uniform and arrangements for private study; the school is aware of their views, but has decided not to change the current arrangements. Discussion with students during the course of the inspection indicates that they are aware of the reasons for this.

## **COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES**

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

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

#### **The school's sense of common purpose helps to sustain very high attainment:**

1. The school is successful in meeting its clear aims to nurture maturity and foster the intellectual development of very high attaining pupils. As a result, the school has a very strong sense of common purpose that embraces those involved, often for the rest of their lives. Confirmed by pupils, students, teachers, other members of staff, governors and past students, to be a Tiffinian clearly means a great deal to them.
2. The very good leadership's ambitions are generally realised: a tradition of success and high expectation pervades the school. Pupils are caught up in an atmosphere of high endeavour, so nearly all try very hard to give of their best. In conversation, they appreciate the very good relationships they have with each other and with the staff. The philosophy of learning by first-hand experience is particularly well developed; very frequent study visits to broaden the pupils and students' learning experiences contribute strongly to high achievement and standards.
3. Strong parental support reinforces the sense of common purpose. The pupils clearly enjoy attending school. Attendance rates are very good compared with national figures, and with no instance of unauthorised absence in the past year, the parents' appreciation of the importance of their sons' education is also good. The pupils come to learn and also to enjoy themselves. However, a lack of punctuality to lessons sometimes mars the very good overall picture. A very high (94%) percentage of respondents to the governors' questionnaire to parents stated their sons liked what they saw as a well led and managed school with a very interesting range of enrichment activities and one that made pupils work very hard to achieve their best. Inspectors agree with the parents' opinions.
4. The pupils' very good attitudes and behaviour are major contributory factors in the high and rising standards. They were very good or excellent in over 80 per cent of the evaluated lessons. Only on the rare occasions when the teaching fails badly to match their understanding and aspirations do the pupils show disapproval. Normally, they are very keen to learn, responding magnificently to the stimuli teaching provides. The pupils do their homework conscientiously, so its contribution to learning is very good. The pupils are courteous, show respect for others, for example listening carefully to all points of view in some energising discussions in lessons, school councils and in corridors. Their research skills mature and complement well the pupils' lively curiosity.
5. The good curriculum provision is subject to continual review to keep it in line with the needs of very high attainers. All pupils in Years 7 and 8 study physics, biology, chemistry, drama, Latin and all other required National Curriculum subjects and religious education, with drama introduced in Year 8. Provision for ICT is a comparative weakness, it is only taught as a separate subject in Year 7 and limited use is made of it in other subjects thereafter.
6. The choices available in Years 10 and 11 perpetuate the purpose of nurturing high standards in the main subject range. A decision not to include social sciences in the few extra choices available in Year 10 is of concern to a few parents, but it coheres with school policy. Careers education has improved since the previous inspection; provision is now reinforced by the allocation of a part-time professional careers officer

who provides a valuable service to individuals by giving enquirers relevant advice on how to find out about a given career and any pitfalls.

7. The great strength of the school curriculum lies in an extremely broad, highly effective range of activities designed to enrich the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is based around a dynamic house system, very many educational visits, high-quality productions and competitions that abound in many fields; for the pupils, excellent personal development is synonymous with school life.
8. Uniformity of purpose appears in the effective steps taken to make sure that pupils do not fall behind. The analysis of test and examination results, for example by year or ethnic group, is meticulous. Regular reviews and the setting of targets for pupils contribute well to raising standards. Provision for pupils with identified special educational needs has improved greatly since the previous inspection; it is now good. The very good management of issues related to avoiding disadvantage has, within quite severe time constraints, devised and implemented a good school policy, drawn up suitable education plans and provided effective staff training on, for example, catering for pupils with dyslexia and other learning needs. A part-time school counsellor has been appointed and a specialist on dyslexia works regularly on a one-to-one basis with those in most need. Underachievers are carefully identified and are given close attention from Year 7, so they do not fall behind; their targets for improvement are updated each summer. The pupils with English as an additional language are equally well catered for; they improve rapidly and, from GCSE onwards, there is no identifiable difference in performance in any examination.
9. A main ambition of the school is to foster talent. Work to extend the gifted and talented, of whom there are very many, has been built into the enrichment activities, so that, for example, high attainers in modern foreign languages practise their skills in producing short plays for younger pupils. The very many extra music, sporting and drama activities provide the same service and the numbers participating are very high.
10. The close attention to how pupils are doing is contributing very effectively to raising standards. Means of helping them to do so have improved substantially since the previous inspection. Assessment procedures are generally very good, with individual target setting now well enshrined in practice, with form tutors and senior managers conducting effective individual interviews.
11. As a result of the successful, concerted efforts to make them do so, standards have risen, year-on-year since the previous inspection. Average point scores are in the top five per cent nationally for tests and examinations for 14- and 16-year-olds and for A-levels compared with boys nationally. A-level results in 2002 were the best in the school's history, although there is room for improvement in some subjects, to match, for example, the very high standards in mathematics. GCSE results are very high compared with similar schools and have, since the previous inspection, risen at a faster rate than the national trend of improvement. It is, however, clear that the GCSE examination itself, taken by 16-year-olds, does not extend many of the pupils unduly. Willing to take risks, the school is, after consultation, taking steps to raise the challenge to such pupils by arranging earlier entry for national tests for 14-year-olds and passing directly to A/S level examinations to be taken at the end of Year 11, in some subjects at first. Initial evaluation shows the pupils well able to cope with the increased demands, for example, in A/S chemistry.

**Excellent personal development, arising from strong traditions of very high expectations and tolerance, produces mature and responsible young adults:**

12. Very good assemblies and the strengthened religious education curriculum are but part of the excellent provision for spiritual and moral development. Pupils, who play very active roles in the proceedings, confirm in conversation the value they reap from assemblies that celebrate the school's successes, and also provoke and challenge them to reflect upon current issues.
13. The school benefits greatly from its multi-ethnic make up. The combination of the many fundamentally varied backgrounds into a common search for excellence is one of its most compelling features. Very enthusiastic teaching of religious education also gets the pupils to think deeply about matters of concern, taking the viewpoints of different ethnic groups closely into account. In many other subjects, because they so easily spark off each other in keen debate, the pupils' willingness to learn and their capacity for reflection are built upon to give unusually rich learning experiences. A very good Year 11 tutor session, for example, led the pupils to make particularly perceptive contributions to a discussion on the merits or otherwise of current stances on terror and mass destruction. Although the quality of its presentations is not uniformly high, the arrangement for a common thought in tutor time, combined with assemblies, brings the school into line with requirements for a daily act of collective worship.
14. Equally, social and cultural development is excellent. Much of the curriculum is consciously set within a framework that promotes the pupils' personal development. The pupils enjoy learning because of the variety of experiences they have. Such learning is reflected in the very good quality of teaching in most lessons and in the excellent range of enrichment activities. There are outstanding opportunities to enjoy theatrical and musical experiences through the large number of productions each year. Participation in such productions is grasped readily. Theatre studies students find the experience inspirational because of the many workshops and theatre visits and the very good teaching; newcomers are keen to point out the unique opportunities they get at the school. Pupils and students find the work in music stimulating. Senior students are comfortable with the scholarship gained, for example, from reading widely around the development of the symphony or romantic virtuosity. Several ensembles and orchestras bring the pupils into direct contact with members of the wider community who, in the case of the excellent oratorio choir, provide a full, very enthusiastic, high quality vocal balance. Pupils and adults speak with great enthusiasm of the benefits this particular activity brings to them all.
15. The sporting calendar is very strong. Rugby, with 15 teams, is prominent in winter sports, but is well complemented by numerous others; cricket and athletics are the prominent summer features. Rowing is prominent throughout the year. These activities allow the pupils to play against opposition from near and far, including numerous fixtures abroad, all contributing very strongly to the personal development of the very large numbers who partake.
16. Other excellent opportunities for personal development abound. The challenges occur not only in lessons, but also in many other aspects of school life. A vibrant house system is at the heart of the many school sporting, public speaking, chess and other competitions. Older students are often involved closely in the activities of younger pupils. For instance, the excellent school council is run by them and involves pupils from each year. Reporting back to individual forms is crucial to full involvement. Meetings are conducted in exemplary fashion, with only very light touches from members of staff. Fund-raising activities for charities and for school improvements are

very good outcomes of the school council's work. It is an aspect of school life that exemplifies the uniformity of purpose and promotes citizenship very effectively. Similarly, during a history society meeting, the pupils compared historical and current affairs by debating man's inability to learn from his mistakes. They analysed the characters of leaders whose irrationality, lack of humility and search for political justifications behind their actions were prime features of any quest for re-election. The pupils gave each other time to unravel long arguments, showing great maturity in so doing.

17. The students enjoy the challenge of critical thinking, now built into the sixth form general studies course. Modern foreign languages students appreciate the added dimension of getting a different standpoint on news items and of the opportunities for short and longer visits abroad. In business studies, the students appreciate regular attendance at conferences and having their work thoroughly supplemented by use of the Internet.
18. The English curriculum emphasises moral issues through the study of different strata of societies in the selected periods, for example through a sixth form exploration of rustic morality in a study of the poetry of Seamus Heaney and the setting of Frankenstein into an historical and scientific context.
19. Because of the excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, the school produces cultured, articulate young citizens, often well equipped with leadership qualities, who are very well prepared for their next steps, mainly in higher education.

**Very good teaching and learning help the pupils to make good progress:**

20. Teaching and learning are characterised by the teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of their subjects and the pupils' similar, very good learning skills. The best teaching, of which there is a substantial amount, is inspirational; it produces quite outstanding responses from the pupils.
21. An effective programme of training, following national initiatives to improve teaching quality, has led to greater coherence in the pupils' learning experiences. Teachers are careful to discuss with their classes the work that is to be done, and what the pupils should get out of it. Regular checks to see if pupils are keeping up and lesson-end recapitulations are almost generalised good practice.
22. The often outstanding quality of teaching and learning in drama, music and art and design substantiates very well the school's application for specialist performing arts status, particularly as these subjects provide attractive extensions to learning for the many boys whose preferences are towards the mathematical and scientific.
23. A very wide range of teaching methods underpins the very high standards in mathematics. Lessons bustle along posing very high challenges to the pupils. Teachers create a good build up of ideas to translate theory into application. Setting targets for improvement is a consistent basis of teaching that invariably expects more and gets it by keeping the class alert and encouraging considered responses so that, for instance, a Year 11 class was able to handle A/S topics easily. In physics, Year 10 pupils asked searching questions and made good progress because of a teacher's stimulating work on radiation. In design and technology, Year 11 pupils sparked well off each other, working largely independently of the teacher as they undertook their projects using numerous manufacturing skills, reinforcing their learning with ICT applications.

24. Good teaching of pupils, whose first language is not English, is effective in helping them catch up, so they do equally as well as others in their public examinations. Making learning relevant is a strong feature of the best teaching. In Latin, the study of linguistics was enlivened by placing the constructions studied within the preparations for an imminent visit to Roman Bath. A Year 8 study of an art movement was set against a background of influential period music, helping the pupils get a better feel for what they were attempting to emulate. Replicated in history, a very good example of wartime music added to the pupils' appreciation of the privations and challenges posed by the blitzkrieg. Learning in such lessons reinforces outstandingly the school's aim to provide a genuine, broad experience for the pupils. A Year 7 poetry lesson's background of classical, Asian and Caribbean music helped create a very stimulating working atmosphere that sustained the pupils' interest throughout. Very high expectations educed well-reasoned interpretations of GCSE questions in a Year 9 English class. The teacher's careful attention to keeping a music lesson moving whilst giving the pupils time to express opinions and to give them time to perform at a high level exemplified the sensitivity found nearly everywhere in the school.
25. Excellence, commonplace in drama, is characterised by the use of first-rate visual stimuli. Because of meticulous preparation in a Year 8 lesson themed on Picasso's Guernica, strong, charismatic teaching won highly creative dramatic interpretations of non-natural art forms; the pupils composed their own pieces, depicting aspects of war, involving fully a pupil with a physical disability in the process. The pupils learn very well through such group activities. First-rate planning, knowledge and understanding results in often-totally engrossed pupils who, in several drama lessons, showed high levels of cultural awareness. Across the curriculum, learning benefits substantially from the complex ethnic mix of the classes.
26. Generally, the support homework provides to learning is very good. The correction of written work improves from stage to stage. By the time the pupils reach GCSE, their work is very thoroughly corrected, with often-helpful comments on how to improve. The pupils themselves appreciate this guidance, seeing it as a means of helping them to reach the targets for improvement they are set. The pattern is not, however, complete; some work by 11- to 14-year-olds is not marked with the care it deserves; hints for improvement are scarcer.
27. The ways teachers and pupils organise so many different enrichment activities contribute equally significantly to the overall very good quality of teaching and learning, which do not stop at the classroom door. Teaching and learning improve from stage to stage, as the pupils become more adept learners. In 2001/2, the school ran 90 educational visits to support learning. Mainly organised by subjects, with some interesting amalgamations such as history, chemistry and classics, to army and science museums, these activities are clear spurs to learning. The numbers participating are often very high, demonstrating the commonly-shared intention to provide and enjoy stimulating learning.

**The very good leadership is willing to take risks; it moves the school forward on many fronts:**

28. The headteacher provides excellent leadership. Similar management skills have allowed him, in very close collaboration with the governors, to build sensitively on the school's cherished traditions, so that since the previous inspection standards have risen, the overall quality of education has gone on improving and the support of parents

is even greater.

29. Proposals for further curriculum modification, intended to provide greater challenge to the pupils are well established. Precursors, such as the four-day curriculum liberation arrangements where the normal timetable is replaced by demanding individual and group projects, have met with broad approval. Further developments to modify the timing and pattern of national tests and examinations are in advanced stages of discussion. Very sensibly, the headteacher and governors have carefully avoided the national trend towards examination proliferation and elevated point scores, especially in the sixth form. Restrictions, in the main, to three A-level subject entries, but with a very good, enterprising range of extra interest activities put a limit on average A-Level point scores, but cater particularly well for the boys' personal development.
30. The effectiveness of senior management structures has improved and deployment is carefully arranged so that the school uses the strengths of individuals to best effect. Some weaknesses remain in the consistency of the senior leadership's evaluation of the work of subject departments. Overall, nonetheless, the leadership of key staff is very good. They are held closely to account by the headteacher through regular meetings in which they report and agree required further direction.
31. Since the previous inspection, very good commitment to equality of opportunity is shown by the better identification of any underachievement, for example the linguistic under-performance of some pupils starting in Year 7 and the successful remedial work that lets them catch up before they take GCSEs. At other times, improving assessments pick up much more quickly pupils who fall behind. They are given helpful targets for improvement so that, in mathematics for instance, no pupil has fallen short in the recent past of the demanding standards expected.
32. To broaden the pupils' experiences, the school is now in advanced application stages of an imaginative project for performing arts college recognition, with dance as the main extension of what is currently very strong music and drama provision. Such strengths typify the ways the school encourages the pupils to gain new skills and to perfect those many already have, so providing an education that matches talent very closely.
33. Well-established performance management is contributing to raising standards by identifying professional needs, allying these to an excellent development plan, whose thorough review programme makes it effective, and to training. Priorities for development revolve around improving teaching and learning and are coherent across all subjects.
34. A very good, comprehensive programme of classroom evaluations of teaching and learning, carried out by senior and departmental leaders, complements performance management. It is improving collaboration and the sharing of good practice. The results of the evaluations vary in value, as they are not always sufficiently clear on the improvements that should be made.
35. The highly-committed governing body is a great strength in helping to shape the direction of the school. The governors not only hold the school very thoroughly to account, but also provide expertise and help, for example in making sure all health and safety requirements are met before the very many educational visits take place. The governors fulfil their statutory duties, except in the provision of religious education in the sixth form.
36. The strategic use of resources and the allocation of finances to aspects, such as

special educational needs for which the school receives very low funding from outside, are very good. A part-time senior leader manages the budget very carefully and enterprisingly; the budget balances and principles to make sure the school is getting best value are very well applied.

37. Overall resourcing is satisfactory, although some resource deficiencies are found, for instance in business studies. The very well used and managed learning resource centre is unsatisfactorily accommodated; it is not big enough for need. A new building, about to be started, should eradicate this deficiency.
38. The school meets its targets and, considering the willingness and general commitment of all involved, its capacity for further improvement and modification to provision, even better to suit the educational needs of its pupils, is very good. With pupil and student costs very high in comparison with national available figures, yet low in comparison with those of other schools in the local education authority, it is difficult to make a reliable evaluation of value for money. The pupils are from above-average socio-economic backgrounds. They start with very high attainment, which they at least sustain, building, at the same time, their own range of competencies in numerous fields, so benefiting from excellent personal development and reaching very high standards. The school provides good value for money.

## **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

### **The motivation to do well in languages-based subjects**

39. English has not made the same improvement as other departments. Inertia on the part of its leadership has meant that the implementation of national initiatives on literacy and assessment, intended to raise standards, has been very slow. Senior leadership's strategic appointment of a teacher to upgrade the quality of work among younger pupils in Years 7 to 9 has been successful in improving the English results in national tests for 14-year-olds. It has also helped pupils with English as an additional language to close the gap between their standards and those of native speakers of English. The department's leadership has not, so far, been fully successful in getting the new group of teachers to operate as an integrated team, so the pupils and students are not motivated to do well as strongly in this subject as they do in others. Recruitment to A-level courses is low compared with those in mathematics and sciences, students also selecting in greater number subjects such as history.
40. The opportunities for pupils and students of English to participate in educational visits aimed at making the study of the subject more interesting are surprisingly few in a school that prides itself on the ways learning is reinforced and made more stimulating, by first-hand experiences. An absence of English-related societies also contrasts with rich provision in other subjects.
41. Modern foreign languages are also comparatively weak. Some teaching in French fails to connect with the pupils, who are perplexed by a teacher's rate of speaking, which they cannot follow. At the same time, there is an impression on the part of the teacher that a good job is being done. Such weaknesses undermine the good and sometimes very good teaching that does occur. The keenness of a new head of department, whose attempts to stimulate the interest of all pupils by, for example, arranging for the more gifted to prepare materials for younger pupils, is infectious. She has not yet, however, managed to produce a commonly high quality of enthusiastic learning for pupils across French, German and Spanish. It is surprising that in a school with pupils

of such a high calibre, so few take more than one language at GCSE. There is the potential for much more within the time allocated.

### **The range of teaching methods is still sometimes too narrow**

42. Occasionally, teachers talk too lengthily in lessons and get the balance of learning activity wrong, so failing to comply with the school's ambitions, voiced clearly in its development plan, of thrusting responsibility for their own learning more directly onto the pupils. Because the pupils are such good listeners they are able to follow lectures but, in such cases, they have too little opportunity to develop initiative. In ICT and in French, a teacher will occasionally talk above the pupils who, as a result, do not participate fully enough in discussion or written work. Similarly, the range of teaching methods using ICT is not broad enough, yet a training programme has been completed and the availability of equipment has improved. Nonetheless, the rise in standards since the previous inspection is directly attributable to the improvements in the way the pupils are helped to learn and the greater challenges teaching places upon them.

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

43. To raise standards even further, the governors and staff should:
- (1) Reinvigorate the ways subject management promotes collaboration in the teaching of English, so as to raise further the pupils' and students' appreciation of the value of its study. Establish better-founded enthusiasm and a more coherent approach to the teaching of modern foreign languages so as to win interest from the pupils similar to that which they have in other subjects.
  - (2) Reduce the amounts of time some teachers spend talking at pupils and increase the time the pupils have to search out solutions by themselves, with light-touch guidance on the part of staff. Make sure in this process that the teaching builds up pupils' ICT skills and gives them more practice in its use.

### **Sixth form**

- (1) Monitor more carefully and improve the way tutorial and form periods contribute to the students' personal development, by refining the way they are run and eliminating the wastage of time found in some.
- (2) Increase and improve the use of ICT as a means of extending the ways students are able to learn in most subjects.

In Addition:

Refine the general studies programme and build religious education more prominently into it, better to reflect the spirit of the law.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	40
	Sixth form	78
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		65

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
<b>Years 7 – 11</b>							
Number	6	14	10	7	3	0	0
Percentage	15	35	25	17.5	7.5	0	0
<b>Sixth form</b>							
Number	9	35	24	9	1	0	0
Percentage	12	45	30	12	1	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for Years 7 - 11 as each lesson represents more than two percentage points.

### Information about the school's pupils

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	722	341
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	7	0

<b>Special educational needs</b>	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	2	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	28	7

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	237

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	12

## Attendance

### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.2
National comparative data	8.1

### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	1.1

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

## Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 (Year 9)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	142	0	142

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	142	142	141
	Total	142	142	141
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	100 (99)	100 (99)	99 (100)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	98 (85)	100 (99)	96 (99)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	142	142	142
	Total	142	142	142
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	100 (98)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	97 (81)	98 (95)	92 (96)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	138	0	138

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	138	138	138
	Girls	0	0	0
	Total	138	138	138
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	100 (97.8)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	49.2 (47.9)	88.9 (88.5)	94.4 (94.4)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	72 (69.02)
	National	39 (39)

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / A/S / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	161	0	161
	Average point score per candidate	23.8	N/a	23.8
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4

		For candidates entered for GCE A / A/S examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	161	0	161	0	N/a	0
	Average point score per candidate	23.8	N/a	23.8	0	N/a	0
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	17.9	17.4	16.9	18	17.5

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British - Indian
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

<b>No of pupils on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
522	5	0
10	0	0
80	0	0
0	0	0
2	0	0
15	0	0
17	0	0
123	1	0
16	0	0
7	1	0
144	0	0
1	0	0
0	0	0
8	0	0
53	0	0
65	0	0
0	0	0

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

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	59.02
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.0

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

Total number of education support staff	13
Total aggregate hours worked per week	394

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

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	75.2
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#### **Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11**

Key Stage 3	27.56
Key Stage 4	24.29

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	3,655,693
Total expenditure	3,571,510
Expenditure per pupil	3,441
Balance brought forward from previous year	93,348
Balance carried forward to next year	177,531



### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	15.42
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	16.22
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.67
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1032
Number of questionnaires returned	374

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	53	41	4	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	51	37	5	1	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	47	45	3	1	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	50	8	2	6
The teaching is good.	45	45	4	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	37	42	11	2	8
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	52	36	6	1	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	76	21	1	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	33	44	14	2	7
The school is well led and managed.	57	37	1	1	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	36	2	1	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	62	32	2	0	4

### Other issues raised by parents

Many parents added very positive comments to their return; they included standards, teaching quality, commitment of the staff to the pupils and the provision for special educational needs. Reference was also made to the pupils' attitudes and behaviour and the way older pupils mixed well with younger ones.

On the other hand, a few mentioned breakdowns in communications with the staff and inconsistencies in homework that dried up towards the end of the year.

## **PART D: THE SIXTH FORM**

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

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

44. Sixth form examination results are very high. In 2001, A-level results, based on students' average point scores, placed the school in the top five per cent nationally compared with results for boys and in the top six per cent compared with results for boys and girls combined. Considering the school's policy of entering students for a maximum of three examinations, (some students in other schools take four and occasionally five subjects at A-level) this ranking indicates very high outcomes in results for most subjects, with the exception of, in 2001, Latin (because of some students' exceptional personal circumstances) and communication studies.
45. Standards are rising. Average point scores rose in 2002, continuing a consistent trend of improvement since the previous inspection, but national comparisons are not yet available for 2002. In 2001, the proportions of A-level passes in the highest, A/B, categories were well above the national averages in all subjects, except communication studies. The improvements in the proportions of students obtaining very high, A/B, grades has, since the previous inspection, risen from 49 to 67 per cent of all entries.
46. The 2002 results were the best in the school's history. Such improvements are a direct result of the improvements in teaching and learning, stemming from the vigorous emphasis the school has placed, and continues to place, on improving the quality of students' learning. The outstanding mathematics results exemplify the improvements made; 71 of the 90 candidates obtained a grade in the A/B range, (over half with a grade A). One candidate was, however, unclassified. The proportions of A/B grades in art and design, biology, business studies, Chinese, design and technology, geography, history, Latin (an improvement on the previous year), further mathematics, music, sports and theatre studies exceeded the school's very high average. In 2002, the German results were comparatively low. The results in English also fell a little in comparison with the previous year and were amongst the school's lowest average point scores. Following the pattern of the year before, the broadest spread of results occurred in physics, with too many low grade or unclassified results for students of the calibre found in this school.
47. The 2001 A/S-level results were of a similar pattern to the A-level results and were well above average in subjects where national comparisons are available. Big improvements in mathematics between the grades students obtained in the 2001 A/S level and their 2002 A-level results, with only three deciding not to continue, exemplify the effectiveness of the extra work mathematics teachers put in to raise standards. The means to improvement in mathematics have not yet taken such effect in physics.
48. The students achieve well; they make good progress overall. Most students obtain their expected results, although in some cases projected attainment, based upon GCSE results, is not always reached. Value-added measures used nationally do not indicate clearly the progress made by students at this school because their standards on entry to the sixth form are so high. The school continues to explore various methods of evaluating students' attainment and their rates of progress as part of the target setting process. The setting of targets for improvement, close contact with parents about progress and the regular assessments made on students' work are effective in indicating what needs to be done and are helping to raise standards.

49. Target setting is thorough and targets are generally reasonable. The 2002 targets for A-level points scores were exceeded by the actual results. The targets for 2003 may not be sufficiently challenging, however, in view of the fact that the 2002 results have already exceeded the 2003 targets and the 2002 outcome was achieved by a cohort of students which, based on GCSE results, was not as strong as the next cohort.
50. The very high standards in past examination results are confirmed in current lesson observations and through looking at students' written work. Standards of work rise over the two years as students develop their greater skills throughout the A-level courses. Students are able to criticise literature and make relevant associations with other texts, often in high quality discussions. They are articulate, being able to present sustained, reasoned arguments in support of the writer's point of view. Year 13 written work is frequently powerful, mature and well adapted to given purposes and that of Year 12 is fluent, with good use of structure. In history, the students show an astonishing grasp of detail, provide appropriate quotations and sum issues up maturely. Sometimes, in theatre studies for example, the written work lacks something in critical analysis of the sources used. Written work by students of sports studies is well ordered and shows, as in some other subjects, a good use of ICT for research, although, in general, limited use is made of ICT. Students' skills in ICT do not develop greatly beyond those acquired in previous years. Design and technology folders are often excellent, comprehensive and imaginative. In mathematics, the Year 12 students handle co-ordinate geometry well, have a good grasp of basic algebra skills and of aspects of calculus. In Year 13 mathematics, students draw effectively from a wide range of techniques to solve problems with considerable mathematical maturity, explaining their thinking clearly. In sciences, the students' high attainment is seen through their completion of a good range of demanding practical tasks complemented by good notes, although the English usage is sometimes weaker than that found elsewhere. The absence of a consistent approach to the development of students' literacy skills means, for example, that the standard of note-making is sometimes not uniformly high. Relatively lower attainers are sometimes betrayed by weaker spelling.
51. There are no discernible differences in standards attained by different groups of students, including those with special educational needs and from minority ethnic groups, whose use of English now equates with that of native speakers.
52. Retention rates are very high. Virtually all students complete their A-level courses. Entry requirements into the sixth form are demanding; the students must have at least six GCSE grades A\*-B, including four at grade A. Those wishing to take mathematics at A/S or A-level must have a grade A at GCSE. These requirements apply equally to the very high proportion of students staying on from Year 11 and to the 40 or so new students who join from elsewhere.

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

53. Sixth form students have very positive attitudes to their work. A very strong work ethic prevails throughout. Students settle quickly to tasks set, try hard to succeed and show high levels of enthusiasm for all aspects of school life. This has a very positive impact both on the quality of learning and their personal development. They are appreciative of and value the high standards of teaching at the school. As a result, they respect and co-operate fully with staff in the learning experiences provided both in the classroom and through the many enrichment activities on offer. Where opportunities are planned for them to collaborate in small groups and pairs they do so very effectively, showing a well-developed ability to listen to the views of others and modify or change opinions as

a consequence. There are exceptionally high levels of mutual respect throughout and this makes a major contribution to the very positive learning environment. In debate, they are usually very articulate, confident about sharing ideas and hypotheses, and interested in what others have to say. They show a strong desire to learn.

54. Standards of behaviour are almost always of a very high order, with self-discipline slipping only on the very rare occasions when students' interest is not engaged effectively. Students are polite and courteous, showing high levels of consideration for other people, particularly those younger than they are. They are very supportive of one another.
55. The personal development of students is excellent. Respect for others permeates relationships and this makes a significant contribution to the ethos of the school. Students show high levels of application and responsibility during private study, completing homework set to a high standard and making very effective use of the facilities provided for them. They have a lively curiosity, well-developed skills of observation and are able to research effectively on their own. Their response to the many opportunities provided for their personal development results in excellent levels of personal effectiveness, confidence and high levels of awareness of the needs of others both within and beyond the school community.
56. Students value the education they receive and enjoy coming to school. This leads to very good levels of attendance overall. There are, however, too many occasions when the start of lessons is delayed or interrupted by latecomers and this reduces the amount of effective teaching time available.

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

57. Both teaching and learning are very good overall. No subject is unsatisfactorily taught or learned, although there are some differences between them. Teaching is excellent in theatre studies; it is very good in many other subjects and satisfactory in German.
58. Teachers' expectations are of the highest order and these are matched by the students' very good skills in all aspects of learning. There is no difference in the quality of either learning or of teaching between Years 12 and 13. The improvements in A-level standards in recent years are directly attributable to the greater demands and challenges teaching now places upon the students to extend their many talents and to think and research for themselves. The school's recent emphases on improving the quality of learning and extending resources for this purpose are bearing fruit. The, albeit inadequate and soon to be replaced, learning resource centre is very well used as a research base.
59. The very good quality teaching is underpinned by the very good knowledge and understanding of their subjects on the part of the teaching staff. The teachers' great commitment not only provides extra sessions to help amend weaknesses, but also supports the students' very many extra experiences in complementary cultural, sporting and recreational enrichment activities that contribute so well to students' excellent personal development.
60. The best teaching produces some excellent learning, which, for example, develops the students' ability to make deductions and to weigh conflicting evidence, often through paired discussions that allow them to apply their knowledge very effectively. Such collaboration and interaction occur in history, for example, and are often excellent in theatre studies; the students simply want to satisfy their inquisitive natures and to

improve. The use of 'son et lumiere' to create an atmosphere was a particularly good example of the way teaching excites interest. The best teaching in English displays an excellent understanding of each student's language competence and an ability to draw out perceptive comments and make sure all students are able to grasp their significance. The work is set against learning in the previous lesson and strict time limits for its completion keep up momentum. The teacher moves discussions on only when a balance of opinions has been aired. In some English lessons, however, teaching does not always take into account how the students best learn and the pace of lessons is not brisk enough to keep students interested.

61. Learning in mathematics benefits from some outstanding teaching that leaves the students in no doubt as to what will be accomplished. Very good questioning skills and periodic recaps keep the students working to the best of their capabilities so that new mathematical ideas and concepts are absorbed thoroughly and with good pace. The teaching makes the students think for themselves by the use of a good range of learning methods that include collaborative pair work, simple, effective visual stimuli and help that does not give too much away, so the students have to work ideas out themselves. The same applies in physics and chemistry where very high challenges lead to vigorous discussions as the students work from first principles. Teachers' explanations and demonstrations are often excellent, leading the students to think carefully and to improve their own practical skills, which they do.
62. Teachers' planning, management of students, use of time and resources and the development of students' key skills, other than ICT, are all very good.
63. Teachers usually adopt good teaching methods. Although the students are very good listeners and their very good concentration allows them to follow and learn from lectures, the much-improved balance of learning experiences is still not universal. Some teaching in English, German, biology, physics and occasionally in mathematics provides insufficient opportunities for discussion among the students, or allows discussions that are too loosely structured, hence missing important learning points. Over-lengthy introductions, too little checking on full understanding, slow pace with not a wide enough range of activities to sustain the students' interest characterised several lessons in which learning was, nonetheless, satisfactory because of the students' very good attitudes to their studies. Occasional unsatisfactory teaching in French fails to win the students' participation; their patience is tried and resultant disorder mars the pattern of otherwise generally good languages teaching.
64. The students' knowledge of how well they are doing is very good, because most teachers indicate this clearly. The correction of written work is, at this stage, thorough, showing the writer how to improve. Regular assessments and the setting of achievable targets help students to make good progress. Because they are so interested by and in what they are doing, the students' productivity and pace of learning is also very good. Lessons can proceed at a very good, stimulating pace and the students' questioning of the teacher, their considered contributions to debate and independence of thought add considerably to the way they acquire skills and knowledge so very well. The few with special educational needs learn as well as the rest, as do those with English as an additional language.
65. Good homework tasks are set regularly. Learning is very well supported through the generally conscientious completion of homework that extends work already done or prepares for work to be done in class.

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

## STUDENTS?

66. The quality and range of learning opportunities offered to sixth formers is very good as a result of the blend of timetabled courses and a very wide range of enrichment activities. Teaching time per week is well above the national average. This provision meets very successfully the school's aims, particularly in relation to enabling students to be well prepared for further learning and to take a responsible place in society. The curriculum provides very well for the needs and aspirations of the high-attaining students at this school, most of whom go on to higher education.
67. Students choose from a reasonable but not extensive range of 18 subjects, all offered at A/S and A-level. In addition to National Curriculum subjects, students may choose theatre studies, Latin, politics and government, business studies and further mathematics. The languages offered are French and German. All students also take a wide-ranging general studies course that covers aspects of citizenship, but very little indeed on religious studies. Provision for religious education in the sixth form does not meet the spirit of the law. All students have a fortnightly tutorial lesson, including careers education, and a weekly games afternoon. General studies courses are run in collaboration with The Tiffin Girls' School nearby and both students and staff feel that this collaboration greatly enriches the course. Links with local businesses enhance the quality of provision, particularly in the business studies course.
68. The school is reviewing its approach to the accreditation of work on the general studies course having taken the decision not to enter students for the general studies A-level examination nor to aim for accreditation through key skills certification. Students are now intending to sit an A/S-level examination in critical thinking to recognise achievements on some aspects of the general studies course. Provision for students to develop key skills is generally good, although ICT is not used extensively across the curriculum and students' skills are not developed greatly beyond levels reached much lower down in the school. Advanced vocational courses and formal accreditation of key skills achievements are available in other schools and colleges serving the area and are not offered here. A few students leave after Year 11 to study elsewhere after appropriate guidance from the careers adviser.
69. The sixth form curriculum includes a once-fortnightly tutorial lesson. Planning for this is undertaken by the head of sixth form with the groups of tutors concerned and contains many valuable elements, including, for example, study skills. The actual provision depends on the skills of individual tutors in delivering the programme and varies greatly from class to class so that experiences for different students are uneven and range from very good to barely satisfactory. Tutor time is also used very variably in different tutor groups. In some sessions, students engage in valuable activities or discussions whereas in others, precious time is wasted.
70. The sixth form curriculum is under review. All students are currently expected to take at least four A/S subjects in Year 12. Most students go on to take three subjects in Year 13. The school has considered carefully the issue of student workload and the balance of time students dedicate to A-level studies compared with that for enrichment activities. It is rightly concerned to ensure that an appropriate balance is achieved so that academic successes may go hand in hand with the many personal developments made possible through the school's enrichment programme. The current struggle to achieve the best balance is articulated within the school development plan; the school is envisaging the integration of enrichment activities with the curriculum as part of a 'Curriculum Liberation' process. Another aspect of 'Curriculum Liberation' is the possible bypassing of GCSE and moving straight from Key Stage 3 to A/S level,

starting in Year 10 for some subjects and this will have an impact on future sixth form provision. Such curriculum considerations are examples of the strengths in strategic thinking displayed in the school that result in an establishment committed to continued curriculum improvement and the raising of standards. It is entirely appropriate for staff and governors to be undertaking this form of curriculum review in the context of a school of high attaining pupils and students.

71. Equality of access and opportunity in relation to the curriculum are very good. Students are generally satisfied with the selection of courses available and feel that the information they have received to inform their choice is clear, accurate and helpful. Some state that a wider choice of subjects might be appealing but are quick to point out the benefits of all the other educational provision at the school that they value enormously. Students, in the main, are able to embark on courses of their choice because timetable construction is undertaken after their choices have been carefully considered and analysed. Some students are not able to take up their preferences, in business studies, for example, because the number of students interested exceeds the capacity of the two classes the school is able to run.
72. The school provides an excellent range of enrichment activities that provides for students' continued spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is a strength of the school as a whole as well as in the sixth form. These activities, the school states, form an important part of school life and 'boys must be available out of school hours, including weekends, when asked to represent the school'. The House system (with six houses) mounts 16 competitions each year across a wide range of fields, sporting and others, including public speaking, chess and general knowledge. Every year there are several major drama productions, numerous concerts and a vast array of sporting events. Many clubs are held. A large number of trips and visits is organised, some to support specific areas of learning and others of a general educational nature. Sixth form students take a key role in organising many of the activities. The prefect system, for example, includes a group of subject prefects who support enrichment activities within their subjects. Sixth form students benefit greatly from this rich set of activities as participants and also as organisers and leaders.
73. The curriculum as a whole is planned well and subjects within it have programmes that allow for students to make good progress, academically and personally. Through taught programmes and the enrichment activities, students have numerous opportunities to reflect on many broad issues in life. The assemblies contribute greatly to developing students' spiritual awareness and self-knowledge. In theatre studies, for example, and in the best tutorial or form periods, the opportunities for developing students' moral and spiritual dimensions are excellent.
74. Opportunities for students to engage in private study are good. Homework assignments in many subjects sometimes require research activity or independent reading as well as writing tasks. These assignments are set regularly and are of good quality. A balance of supervised and non-supervised private study is arranged for students making use of the facilities provided in the learning resource centre, which contains the library and sixth form centre. Some students feel that the requirement to engage in supervised study is restrictive, as they would prefer to work at home. Nevertheless, the provision reinforces the school's expectation of regular, hard work and high achievement.

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

### Assessment

75. Procedures for assessing students' attainment and progress are very good. They are thorough, effective and used regularly to ensure that problems are identified at an early stage and students alerted where extra effort is needed. Marking is usually of a very high standard and valued by students. It identifies for them what they must do to improve and is often supplemented by verbal advice where this is needed. Learning objectives are made clear and most teachers check regularly how well they are being achieved as lessons progress, revisiting points where needed and ensuring that all students learn thoroughly. Some teaching in English, however, does not use data or other means to identify underachievement, so that evaluation of work does not consistently influence the planning for the next lesson. In art and design, assessment is good but the recording of assessment information is not undertaken systematically.
76. Target-setting interviews are held each term and students are encouraged to evaluate and discuss how well they are achieving. The resultant individual targets are, however, sometimes too general to be of real help in raising standards, for example 'improve quality of work across the board'. As a result, a few students are dubious about the value of the process, although most state that they find the dedicated time with tutors or other senior staff, discussing their own next steps or targets, very useful; they value the individual approach and time for reflection.
77. Reporting on students' attainment and progress is generally good. The best reports evaluate subject-related strengths and relative weaknesses, ensuring that students understand what they must do to improve; particularly good examples are found in mathematics. There are, however, inconsistencies in the evaluation of students' work in some end-of-year progress reports. The weaker reports contain comments that are too vague and these restrict students' understanding of where they should focus their efforts to raise the standards they achieve.
78. Examination results are analysed very thoroughly. Heads of department and senior staff evaluate students' progress carefully, for individuals and for whole groups. Data analysis and use is, for example, carried out well in mathematics, chemistry, physics and business studies. They use the outcomes of the analyses very well to plan any necessary adjustments to provision or to curriculum planning so that achievements can be raised even further. Such analyses have contributed considerably to the rise in standards.

### Advice, support and guidance

79. Students' academic and personal support and guidance are very good. They are usually given suitable advice about courses of study prior to enrolment, ensuring they consider these against their anticipated needs for higher education.
80. Form tutors know their students very well, offering effective support and advice where needed. Students feel confident that there is someone with whom they can discuss concerns. Tutorial lessons and tutor periods provide good opportunities for guidance, although poor planning for these, in some cases, results in time being used unproductively. Preparation for higher education and support for university applications is thorough. Careers guidance is given high priority and meets the individual needs of students very well. Support for students when examination results are published is sensitive and effective.

81. The head of sixth form, with the teams of tutors, acts swiftly to deal with any problems noted in connection with students' learning or wellbeing. Parents are informed in writing promptly with any concerns. The school is now making arrangements to notify parents and students, with equal speed, of any noted successes, so that a balanced picture is provided of both strengths and concerns, if any. This activity also seeks, quite rightly, to state overtly students' various achievements, academic or otherwise, throughout the sixth form. Various publications, notices and presentations in assemblies are also used very effectively to recognise and applaud achievements.
82. The school works effectively to ensure students' health and safety.

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

83. Parents and students are generally pleased with what the school provides and achieves. They are particularly appreciative of the information they receive about the sixth form at the time they are making decisions during Year 11 and the help given in settling in. They value the effectiveness of leadership and management, the high quality of teaching, accessibility of teachers, the wide range of enrichment activities and opportunities for taking responsibility that are provided. Students like coming to school. Some parents feel the school does not work sufficiently closely with them when dealing with their concerns, that there is an inconsistent approach to returning telephone calls, answering letters and keeping parents up to date with how issues raised are being dealt with. Parents, particularly those with children in Year 13, and students have reservations about the quality of information they receive about progress. Inspectors agree that annual progress reports do not always evaluate sufficiently well students' strengths and relative weaknesses in subjects and this sometimes leads to targets that are not effectively focused on what must be done to improve. Ongoing academic guidance for students through marking and individual advice in lessons is, however, of a high standard.

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

84. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The school's expectations of high academic success and personal development are clearly stated in the sixth form as elsewhere in the school. The headteacher provides excellent leadership for the school as a whole. He, the senior managers and other staff work with a shared vision for the school and are successful in achieving improvements. Sixth form students are encouraged to play a crucial part in setting the tone and ethos for younger pupils. Through their high academic achievements and personal qualities as confident and able young men, the students present clearly the successful outcomes of the school.
85. The head of sixth form is an able manager who provides very good guidance for sixth form tutors on how they should undertake their roles. Sixth form tutors are effective in many ways, particularly in monitoring the work and progress of individual students. The quality of work within tutorial lessons and tutor periods, however, is too variable and is not monitored closely enough to ensure consistency across the form groups.
86. The work of the governing body is very good. Governors work extremely closely and supportively with school staff to set the strategic direction for the school and keep performance under review. They have a very clear understanding of the strengths of the school and where it could improve. Resources are used wisely. Spending is linked

very well to educational priorities although this fact is not clearly articulated in the school development plan. This sixth form is cost effective.

87. Heads of department contribute well to the overall management of the sixth form. In most subjects, leadership and management are at least good, mostly very good and, in some cases, excellent. Subject leaders place a great emphasis on raising or maintaining high standards. Performance management systems are reasonably well established so that the quality of provision is kept under review and improved where necessary, although a few shortcomings have yet to be resolved in English and modern foreign languages and also in relation to developing further students' skills in ICT. Equality of access and opportunity is considered within the school development plan and performance management systems contribute to a large extent in ensuring that in most respects equality is assured. Over the last year or so, the school has worked effectively to increase the use of performance data to promote high standards and achievements. Most heads of department ensure that staff use data well to set targets for individual students, to adjust the curriculum or lesson plans as and when required and to check carefully that each student is making at least the progress expected.
88. The sharing of good practice in teaching and learning is a strong feature in the theatre studies and mathematics departments. This effective teamwork accounts in large measure for their successes. In English, French and German good practice is not shared sufficiently well.
89. Plans for the development of the sixth form, in terms of the curriculum, teaching and learning, resources and other enrichment activities are stated clearly in the school development plan. Many departmental plans relate to improving provision and outcomes in the sixth form, some of them involve broadening further teaching and learning methods, particularly in the use of ICT; this is indeed required, as the use of ICT is limited in many areas of sixth form work. ICT is used well in geography and Latin. The development plans for the sixth form year teams are very narrow in their focus and do not present the range of development work these teams are engaged in as seen, for example, in notes of their meetings.

## **Resources**

90. The school has sufficient well-qualified teachers and support staff. All teachers are involved in sixth form teaching. They are all suitably qualified. Support staff contribute very effectively to the smooth running of the school. A particular strength is the commitment of so many members in contributing to the wide range of enrichment activities, clubs, trips and visits.
91. Resources for learning are mostly adequate and they are good in chemistry. In theatre studies, resources are good and organised well. In physics, extra learning materials are required for some students who need additional help and there are deficiencies in business studies. Studio equipment is cumbersome and out of date in music.
92. The school has worked hard in recent years to improve provision for ICT, but the use of ICT to support teaching and learning is still a weakness in many subjects in the sixth form as in other parts of the school. Access to computers is still limited or difficult for some teachers. The use of interactive whiteboards is growing and their use adds considerably to the pleasure of learning, because so many concepts and ideas can be presented in an interesting way.

93. In many subjects, very good use is made of outside resources to support learning. This includes art organisations, galleries, theatres and concert venues. Educational visits in the UK and abroad also broaden very substantially students' educational experiences in all subjects, except English.
94. Accommodation is tight and shortage of space has been exacerbated as the school has grown in size. In a few subjects, shortage of space restricts the quality or nature of the teaching and learning activities. Such limitations occur in science, design and technology, business studies and to some extent in sports studies, although for sixth form physical education and games, facilities are good, albeit mostly off-site.
95. The private study facilities available for sixth form students in the learning resource centre are, at times, very cramped. In addition, the noise from the sixth form centre on the first floor sometimes disrupts lessons in the small teaching rooms above it on the second floor.
96. An imminent, new learning resource centre is an exciting extension to the policy of broadening teaching methods and the way students learn, with a lecture theatre and many different study spaces for groups and individuals as well as a library and other resources for learning.

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

In the inspection, 15 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001.

### *GCE A/S level courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Chemistry	1	100	43	100	5	5.00	0.77
German	4	100	82	50	13	3.25	1.85
Further Mathematics	4	100	62	50	15	3.75	1.51
Physics	1	100	52	-	4	3.00	0.90

### *GCE A level and AVCE courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	16	100	96	94	46	8.88	6.57
Biology	47	94	88	45	34	6.38	5.25
Business studies	33	97	92	64	32	7.52	5.50
Chemistry	63	94	90	75	43	7.75	5.90
Classical studies	9	67	95	56	49	5.78	6.51
Communication studies	11	100	93	9	31	5.27	5.53
Computer studies	2	100	86	100	23	10.00	4.62
English literature	25	100	95	52	37	7.12	5.91
French	12	100	89	58	38	7.67	5.59
Full design and technology	20	100	91	75	30	8.10	5.38
Geography	17	100	92	47	38	7.18	5.74
History	32	100	88	69	35	7.50	5.45
Mathematics	115	93	87	69	43	7.60	5.80
Music	8	100	93	88	35	9.00	5.74
Other social studies	27	100	87	93	34	9.26	5.30
Physics	58	93	88	69	40	7.66	5.67
Sports/PE studies	7	86	92	29	25	5.43	5.09

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

### MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

#### MATHEMATICS

The main focus was on mathematics, but further mathematics was also sampled. The entry requirement for further mathematics of a GCSE A\* grade is high. From a very able group of students, results in examinations are very high; they were, for example, well above the national average in 2001. Teaching and learning in further mathematics are very rapid and students rise to teachers' high expectations of their speedy understanding of new ideas and an agility in tackling mathematical manipulations and operations.

Overall the quality of provision in mathematics is **very good**.

##### Strengths

- Students obtain high A-level examination results.
- Very good teaching overall and methodical, rigorous assessment raise standards.
- Extra support, where necessary, is provided beyond lesson times - this is greatly valued by the students.
- A strong partnership with common aims and approaches creates an ethos of diligence and determination amongst virtually all students.
- The learning environment is enhanced by many displays of mathematical interest.

##### Areas for improvement

- Further enrich teaching and learning by weaving in applications of mathematics from a broad range of contexts, from the present and past time; develop, as necessary, staff knowledge in this respect.
- Extend the use of ICT for teaching and learning.

97. Mathematics is a very successful area of the school's work; it is a very popular subject in the sixth form. Student numbers are often 50 per cent higher than those for the next most popular subjects of science.
98. Results in mathematics A-level examinations are high and also improved well from 1998 to 2002, both in terms of average grades and in the proportion of students achieving the highest grades, A or B. In 2001, results were well above the national average and the 2002 results are even higher than those in 2001.
99. Most students make good progress over the two-year course; in a few cases, results are lower than might be expected in relation to students' GCSE results. In 2001, the gap between students' mathematics results and their results in other subjects taken was smaller at Tiffin School than the gap occurring nationally. (Nationally, students perform less well in mathematics than in the other subjects they take at A-level). This outcome is another indicator of the successful work undertaken in the mathematics department.
100. Standards of work seen in lessons and in students' books are well above average. Teaching demands a brisk pace of work and much material is covered in lessons with students embarking on further work independently. Most students have a very good grasp of algebra and other key mathematical skills by the start of Year 12. This enables them to absorb new mathematical ideas easily, make and describe generalisations efficiently and construct and manipulate formulae or equations skilfully. Students who

have any weaknesses, for example if their skills in algebra are not developed highly enough, are provided with good extra support

101. Students show confidence and mathematical maturity. Some use mathematical intuition very effectively. When given the opportunity, students are able to explain the reasoning behind an answer or justify the use of a particular technique. In Year 12, students build well on previous learning from GCSE, extending, for example, their skills in solving quadratic equations. They quickly acquire new skills in co-ordinate geometry and in the differential calculus. In Year 13, students have a very good grasp of the use of regression lines and their applications in a range of real life contexts. They operate with trigonometrical functions competently and in most cases with thorough understanding, although a few students carry out manipulations mechanically without a true grasp of underlying concepts.
102. In all lessons, students' learning is at least good and sometimes very good or excellent. Most students show great diligence and determination in their learning. They pose their own questions and respond very well to teachers' often probing and provocative questioning. A few do not test their own understanding and are content to operate mechanically.
103. Teaching is very good overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and most use a broad range of teaching styles. Students' progress is carefully monitored through regular testing. Teachers set clear expectations about what should be achieved. Relationships are strong, cordial and respectful. These strong features in teaching contribute greatly not only to students' rate of progress but to their very positive attitudes towards mathematics. At times, the opportunity for students to explain their thinking is more limited and sometimes dialogue is restricted to simple questions and brief answers. Teaching is rarely enhanced through the incorporation of examples from the history of mathematics or about how a given technique is used in the world of work.
104. In the highest quality teaching, some of it outstanding, the dialogue between teacher and students is lively and includes the teacher's invitation to students to expand on their ideas and reasoning, to justify the use of one method over another or to outline why an approach might be flawed. The pace of teaching is often fast but care is taken to secure good understanding.
105. Students make appropriate use of calculators. Little use is made of computers to support students' learning in mathematics. The broadening of mathematical experiences through the use of computers was raised in the previous inspection report.
106. Leadership and management are very good with a strong focus on the continued improvement and development of teaching and learning. The effective team of teachers, focused on achieving high standards for students, works in strong partnership with common aims and approaches. Administration is efficient. Rigorously kept computerised records of students' attainments show clearly how each is progressing and what outcome is hoped for. Resources are adequate. Pleasant accommodation contributes positively to the high quality teaching and learning, although noise from the sixth form common room below can disrupt in some rooms.
107. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Examination results have risen, teaching and learning styles are now more varied but the use of ICT is too limited.

## **SCIENCES**

The inspection focused on chemistry and physics, but biology was also sampled. In biology, results in 2001 were well above average and students did well in comparison with their results at GCSE. In the two lessons observed, students worked well and were eager to learn. Teaching was at least satisfactory.

## Chemistry

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

### Strengths

- Teaching is very good.
- The proportion of students achieving higher grades (A-B) is very high.
- Leadership and management are very good.

### Areas for improvement.

- The use of ICT as a support for learning is underdeveloped.

108. The GCE A/S and A-level examination results in 2001 were well above the averages of all other schools nationally. A-level results were better than those achieved in 2000. Nearly all students gained a pass grade and the proportion gaining higher grades, A and B, was well above average. In relation to their GCSE results, students performed better than expected. Provisional 2002 A/S results were better than those obtained in 2001 particularly at grades A and B. Whilst the number of provisional grades A to E at A-level in 2002 was better than those in 2001, grades A and B were below those obtained in 2001. In both examinations, students achieved better grades than expected considering their GCSE grades.
109. Current standards are well above average. Those with English as an additional language reach standards that equate with those of others. In Year 13, students are achieving very well in relation to their GCSE results. In lessons, students achieve very well as a result of the very good, demanding teaching. In one lesson, for example, students made very good progress in their understanding of standard electrode potentials. Written work is generally well presented and matches the confidence which students display in the classroom. However, the use of standard English in writing laboratory reports is not always satisfactory.
110. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course. Nevertheless, higher attaining students are achieving very well. They show, for example, good knowledge and understanding of ionisation energies. Most are successfully moving on from GCSE work into new areas of chemistry and are making good progress in developing their skills of independent research. Lower attainers have greater difficulty in applying the concepts learned in GCSE to more advanced work.
111. Teaching is very good. The use of very good subject knowledge by teachers, good well-focused planning and, in some lessons, a good range of methods maintain interest and engender learning. There is insufficient opportunity for students to work independently in some lessons. Assessment is used very well to monitor the students' progress, to identify underachievers and adjust teaching accordingly. Day-to-day marking is thorough overall and usually provides valuable information for students on how to improve their performance.
112. Students learn very well. They respond very well to challenge, work very hard and show interest in their work. They support and help each other and enter into mature

discussion as part of their learning. They undertake independent work maturely when required.

113. Leadership and management are very good. There is a strong commitment to improving standards. The scheme of work provides a consistent approach to the teaching of chemistry. A good range of learning support materials is available, and is used well to develop opportunities for independent learning. However, insufficient attention is given to the use of ICT to improve teaching and learning. Target setting, based on careful analysis of students' performance in tests, is in place and used very effectively to provide learning goals.
114. Results in chemistry have improved significantly since the previous inspection and overall improvement has been very good.

## PHYSICS

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

### Strengths

- Very good teaching helps to raise standards.
- The number of students achieving higher grades (A-B) is high.

### Areas for improvement.

- There are not enough appropriate materials for slower learners to help eliminate the tail of unsuccessful A-level candidates.

115. Results in the 2001 A/S and A-level examinations were well above average compared with all other schools nationally. The A-level results in 2001 were an improvement over those in 2000. The large majority of students gained a pass grade and the proportion gaining higher grades, A and B, was well above average. Students performed better than their GCSE results indicated. Provisional 2002 A/S-level results, were better than those obtained in 2001 particularly at grades A and B. Whilst the overall number of provisional pass grades (A to E) at A-level in 2002 were similar to those in 2001, the number gaining grades A and B was not as good. In both examinations students achieved better grades than expected, considering their GCSE grades. Considering the overall A-level success profile in the school, there are too many students who fail in physics.
116. Standards currently are well above average for all students, including those with English as an additional language. In Year 13, students achieve well in relation to their GCSE results. In lessons, students achieve very well as a result of very good, demanding teaching. In one Year 13 physics lesson, for example, students made excellent progress in their understanding of polarised light. Most students recall previous knowledge very well and use it effectively to develop further understanding. Written work is generally well presented and matches the confidence which students display in the classroom.
117. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course. Nevertheless higher attaining students achieve very well. They show, for example, good knowledge and understanding of how energy is transferred when a spring oscillates and the effects of 'damping'. Most students are successfully moving on from GCSE work into new areas of physics and are making good progress in developing their skills of independent research. Lower attaining students, however, have greater difficulty in applying the

physics learned in GCSE to more advanced work.

118. Teaching is very good, with some excellent features. The use of very good subject knowledge by teachers, good well-focused planning and, in some lessons, a good range of methods maintain interest and promote learning. There is insufficient opportunity for students to work independently in some lessons and some lower-attainers are not always provided with materials which adequately support their progress. Assessment is used very well to monitor the progress of students, to identify underachievers and adjust teaching accordingly. Day-to-day marking is thorough overall and usually provides valuable information for students on how to improve their performance.
119. Students learn very well. They respond very well to challenge, work very hard and show interest in their work. They support and help each other and enter into mature discussion as part of their learning. They undertake independent work maturely.
120. Leadership and management are very good overall. There is a commitment to improving standards. The scheme of work provides a consistent approach to the teaching of physics. A good range of learning support materials is available, and is used well to develop opportunities for independent learning. Target setting, based on careful analysis of students' performance in tests, is in place and used very effectively to provide learning goals.
121. Overall improvement since the previous inspection has been very good; results in physics have improved significantly.

## **ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING**

### **Design and technology**

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **good**.

#### Strengths

- Standards are very good and are improving over time.
- The students' understanding of all aspects of the design cycle is strong.
- The maturity and effectiveness of discussions between teachers and small groups of students raise standards.
- Curriculum, systems and resources development, monitoring and evaluation are very well developed.
- Links with industry, institutes, universities and local businesses are comprehensive; they raise interest and standards.

#### Areas for improvement

- Eliminate some passivity and increase some students' skills as independent learners.
- Improve the provision of computer-aided manufacture systems and their promotion throughout the curriculum for all.
- Extend accommodation, as there are some safety concerns with current provision.

122. A/S and A-level examination results are well above the national average in design and technology. In the two years since A/S started, only one student has failed to reach the pass grade, E, while the proportion reaching the top grades of A and B has risen from 64 per cent to 70 per cent. The A-level design and technology course has been on offer

for many years; in the last five years every student entered has passed, while the number achieving the top grades has always been over 50 per cent: it reached 95 per cent in 2002.

123. Standards, evidenced in current students' coursework, notebooks and folders and in talking with them, are very high as well. Groups have also achieved very well in national awards, scholarships and sponsorships. It is a strength of the department that all the sixth-formers gain a deep knowledge and understanding of design and technology as a means to real problem solving. Students have, in particular, an effective grasp of the whole and the component stages of the design process. Thus even near the start of their course, Year 12 students can discuss the purpose of research during the design phase and apply that understanding to the selection of different types of research to meet different needs in different contexts. Some students in Year 13 can discuss the selection of materials for a given task with much animation, deep understanding and a wide knowledge of different materials and their properties; unusually, almost all understand extremely well what evaluation is and relate it appropriately to design objectives and end user needs.
124. Students' attitudes to the subjects are generally good. Some students, however, do not show overt enthusiasm for the subject; there is some undue passivity. Some students fail to contribute to discussion and to question; they offer only very brief responses to direct questions and make notes that are too brief. Even so, they generally attend well and their relationships with their teachers and with each other can be very good. Teachers encourage strongly independent learning but the outcomes, in terms of students' responses, are not always clearly visible.
125. In general the quality of teaching is very good, and the students make good progress as a result. Teachers plan their lessons effectively, thoroughly and thoughtfully, giving each lesson a set of specific learning objectives and sometimes sharing these with the students. Lessons often move along at great pace and typically involve a variety of resources, including some derived from business and industry, and approaches. Both aspects help the students to concentrate and to learn quickly. The design and technology staff provide a great deal of help outside of lesson time, even by e-mail; the students appreciate this, but it does not promote independent learning. In some lessons, a lecturing style dominates. Little use is made of questions and answers to assess learning. In these lessons, a lot of theory is covered but students' thinking is not developed through this means.
126. The design and technology staff are a very good team of caring, hard-working professionals, highly regarded by students, other schools, exam awarding bodies and local and national firms. Monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department is excellent. The head of department co-ordinates the work of the team very well. The number of technical support hours a year the department receives is low in comparison with many other schools.
127. Accommodation and resources have some shortcomings. The department's physical space is low relative to the needs of the students, whole school curriculum, and the subject. Indeed, some aspects of overcrowding lead to health and safety concerns. The range of technologies the learners can explore is rather restricted - control and computer aided design are underdeveloped, although there are some very good results, and the low level of work available on computer-aided manufacture is a drawback.
128. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Results have risen and

many new developments have extended provision.

## **BUSINESS**

### **Business studies**

Overall the quality of provision in business studies is **good**.

#### Strengths

- A-level and A/S level results were very high in 2001 and rose in 2002.
- The teacher has excellent subject knowledge and high expectations of the students.
- Students are very well motivated to learn and work well together in lessons.
- Very effective use is made of assessment, and the information is fully shared with students.

#### Areas for improvement

- Improve the business learning environment and provide more opportunities for collaborative work.
- Develop opportunities for independent learning skills, using ICT especially.

129. The A-level results in 2001 were well above the national average and were the best since the department's formation in 1989. These results were further improved in the 2002 examination, with the average points score rising from 7.52 in 2001 to 8.08 this year. The standards achieved have improved year-on-year over the last three years and the percentage of A/B grades has continued to increase. The percentage of A/B grades at A/S-level in 2002 was 73.5, 30 per cent higher than in 2001 and well above the school average. Business studies students are achieving well and results compare favourably against other subjects in the school. The subject is very popular and numbers have reached capacity within the existing accommodation.
130. Standards observed in lessons and in written work are very high in both Year 12 and Year 13. These standards are consistent with the examination successes of the last few years. The understanding of business concepts of the Year 12 students is impressive, as only a few students, new to the sixth form, have had any previous experience of the subject. The students are particularly skilful in making their own detailed notes, in working in pairs and developing their arguments in response to skilful questioning by the teacher. They have a thorough understanding of the issues of globalisation and market growth and are able skilfully to interpret and dissect case studies. Year 13 students are able to build up complex balance sheets and understand the financial implications of a range of different scenarios, although a few students still make unnecessary careless calculation mistakes that affect their conclusions.
131. Teaching is good overall with some very good features and all students learn quickly as a result. They respond very positively to the teacher's excellent subject knowledge and they ask thoughtful questions to ensure that their understanding is firmly based. The lessons are well organised with an effective starter exercise to develop interest and motivation, which is quickly followed by probing questions that test the students' analytical and evaluative knowledge. Students are expected to work hard and the pace is fast and challenging. Each activity is carefully timed and there are ample opportunities for students to work in pairs, often selected by the teacher, to reinforce learning. There are, however, limited opportunities for wider group work because of the size of the teaching room and, as a result, presentations to the class are limited. Access to and use of ICT, during the lessons, is limited and the provision is some

distance from the business studies base, although students are provided with a comprehensive list of websites for their own research. Assessment is very good, with work marked carefully and thoroughly according to examination criteria, so that all students have a very clear idea of their progress and what they have to do to strengthen their understanding and overall performance. The students respond very well to the teacher's high expectations and they work with great enthusiasm and purpose.

132. The leadership and management of the subject are good. The students are thoroughly prepared for the examination by regular testing and case study reviews. The key skills of business studies are carefully and systematically taught and monitored and students are very positive about the subject. Most of them take a business and management course at university. Since the previous inspection good progress has been made particularly in improving on the high success rate. However the accommodation does not provide a high quality business environment and impacts negatively upon the range of teaching strategies, particularly limiting the opportunities for group work and presentational activities. These issues were identified in the previous report and are yet to be overcome. Students attend several business conferences each year and are actively encouraged to read the broadsheets and business magazines. A well-stocked business library supports their learning. Young Enterprise is thriving and encouraging the students to gain experience as business entrepreneurs.

## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

### Sports Studies / Physical Education

Overall, the provision in physical education and sports studies is **very good**.

#### Strengths

- Examination results are very good.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very good.
- Curricular and enrichment provision are excellent.

#### Areas for improvement

- Students need better access to ICT during lessons.
- The facilities in which examination courses are delivered are unsatisfactory.

133. Examination results are above the national average and have been consistently so over a number of years. In 2002 A-level results were excellent. Students come prepared to be fully involved in lessons, largely because carefully set homework encourages them to read about and research topics in preparation. Achievement is good. In one very effective lesson, discussion about leadership styles took place with most contributing in an articulate way in response to issues raised by the teacher. Students can compare and contrast different styles of leadership or debate the characteristics and development of elite performances in sport, citing examples of how these are developed and nurtured in different cultures. Written and oral skills are generally excellent and use of appropriate technical vocabulary is a standard feature of lessons. One student, for example, spoke clearly about theoretical effects of massed and distributed practice on performance of motor skills. Analytical skills show clear development and improvement between A/S and A-level courses. The number of students taking examinations reduces significantly between the A/S and A-level courses.

134. The overall standard of teaching is very good. Lessons, always well prepared, start promptly and proceed with pace and purpose. Teachers have appropriately high expectations of students and this is reflected in the very good levels of discussion which take place and in the students' written work. Marking of written work is very thorough and provides students with clear information about how to improve their work. Even though no access to ICT was observed during lessons, it is clear that students are expected to use the Internet to assist in the production of projects and homework. In one lesson, several appropriate website addresses were very helpfully appended to a printed homework schedule. Occasionally, discussions are too long. The classroom used for teaching is not one designated for the subject and does not, therefore, contain supporting displays or inspirational information relating to the course.
135. Both curricular and enrichment provision for physical education in the sixth form are excellent. Many teachers from a range of departments in the school are involved, giving very generously of their time. Arrangements for sixth form games are extremely well organised and administered. All students are expected to attend and the programme provided transcends mere participation, because all of the activities are organised and structured to ensure that students are taught and coached. Facilities, although largely off-campus, are of a high standard. Many students participate in enrichment activities, some going on to achieve very highly in sport.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

### Art and design

Overall, the quality of provision in art and design is **very good**.

#### Strengths

- Standards in A-level art and design are very high.
- Leadership of the department is very good.
- Very good teaching promotes lively interest and very high standards.

#### Areas for development

- The use of ICT is too low; within the department, facilities and access are unsatisfactory.
- The recording of students' progress is not detailed enough.

136. Standards attained by the end of the sixth form are well above average. A-level results have been consistently high over recent years. In 2001, they were well above the national average with almost all the students attaining the higher A and B grades compared to less than half of students nationally. Achievement at this level is very good. Students taking A-level art and design in 2001 attained, on average, over one grade higher than in their other A-level subjects and over three-quarters of them exceeded their target grades. Students with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs reach standards that are similar to those of the rest. In the lessons seen, standards of attainment were generally well above average though with considerable variations as students in Year 12 adjusted to the early stages of the more self-directed A-level courses. Examples of completed project work on display are often of excellent quality with strengths in painting and three-dimensional work. Year 12 students produce interesting tonal compositions in charcoal based on careful observation of still life groups that they have created within mirrored environments. Standards in key skills are good. Students communicate very well in unscripted presentations about the work of artists. They speak clearly and confidently,

using good strategies to engage their audience. Students make effective use of ICT, both for research and as a creative tool, but the department's one computer is inadequate for the demand and most work is carried out at home. Standards in numeracy and literacy are satisfactory with good use of art and design vocabulary in discussions. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Students are very supportive of each other in presentations, participating fully and applauding effort.

137. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Lessons are very well planned and structured with changes of pace and activities that keep students focused. There is a very strong emphasis on individual teaching, which leads to a wide variety of outcomes linked to students' personal interests and aptitudes. The teachers are very knowledgeable in the practical and historical aspects of art and design. They set very good examples when presenting artworks for discussion that encourage and extend students' use of art and design vocabulary. The very thorough scheme of work is enhanced by a very good programme of enrichment activities including life drawing, visits to galleries and working alongside artists in residence. Assessment feedback and target setting are all verbal and of very good quality, however there are insufficient written records to aid continuity in the event of staff absence.
138. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The teachers share a very clear vision of art and design in the sixth form built around the artistic development of all students as individuals. The head of department is very active in bringing students into contact with outside agencies through strong links with local galleries and art organisations.
139. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Standards attained at A-level have risen and the quality of teaching, which was mainly good, is now very good.

## Music

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

### Strengths

- Results in A-level music have been well above the national average in recent years.
- Teaching is very good; teachers have a high level of expertise both as musicologists and as practitioners and are intensely committed to their students.
- Students are highly motivated both to their own learning and to a wide range of musical activities.
- Provision for enrichment music is outstanding.

### Areas for improvement

- Students explore insufficiently their own creativity and inventiveness in free composition.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to experiment with applications of ICT.

140. Examination results at A-level in 2001 were excellent; most students were awarded grade A. The average points score was one of the three highest scoring subjects in the school and was well above average. Results in the A/S examination in 2001 were very good; most students attained the higher grades of A or B. The pattern of success has been consistently high over recent years, with both the numbers taking the A-level course and those obtaining higher grades increasing.
141. Standards of attainment observed during the inspection reflected these high standards. Students' achievement, given their already high starting points, is good. Students have well-developed linguistic skills, and express themselves incisively both orally and in

written work. In examining concepts and exploring musical development, they are perceptive and their observations are made against a rich background of musical knowledge and experience, developed within and outside school. They have an enthusiasm for enquiry, and their extended writing is well researched, both in broad topics such as symphonic development and in specific analyses of particular compositions. One student, analysing 'The Lamb', clearly and systematically linked the textural and melodic devices used by Tavener to the spiritual imagery of the poetry. All students have secure performing skills, and many sing and play at a very high level. String players in the Year 13 class displayed sophisticated communication skills and well-developed stylistic understanding as they worked together to produce a coherent interpretation of a movement from a quartet by Haydn. Students in this class show mature understanding of the chorale writing of J S Bach, and are able to apply guidelines to create appropriate harmonisations with relatively few technical errors. Most are able to 'hear' written harmony, and are conscientious about listening to their exercises to ensure consistency of style. However, few extend their harmonic awareness and their well-developed aural skills by exploring their own powers of invention and creativity in free composition.

142. Students learn well because the teaching is very good and at times excellent. Teachers are well informed, have high levels of expertise and communicate with students with infectious enthusiasm. They present new knowledge systematically and imaginatively, expecting high standards of concentration and response. In a lesson on suspensions, the point was effectively demonstrated and its dramatic impact illustrated in the study of the 'Crucifixus' from Bach's mass in B Minor. As a result students were given insight into the connection between the composer's musical intentions and his religious convictions. The involvement of string players in an open rehearsal of the quartet movement 'The Joke' enabled both players and the remainder of the group to discuss ways of portraying Haydn's sense of humour in performance. However, greater attention needs to be paid to the importance of improvising skills, and to the development of students' composing abilities; currently, there is an emphasis on musicology at the expense of creativity. While there is some use of ICT for scoring and editing, this area has not yet been exploited for more sophisticated applications.
143. Students are highly motivated and enthusiastic about music. All are active participants in at least one and usually several of the choral and instrumental ensembles that take place regularly. In addition, a number of students rehearse and direct small groups. Several students are involved in the musical life of the community, and all take advantage of the wider opportunities offered by the department in its programme of visits to orchestral concerts and the opera. They are good independent learners, conscientious about the presentation of all aspects of their work. Their note-taking and drafting skills are well established. However, most need to explore a wider range of techniques, particularly in composing, and to risk being innovative and inventive.
144. The music department is well managed. The head of department, only recently appointed, is engaged in further developing the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning both in class and in instrumental lessons. Students' work is carefully marked and regularly assessed, and students benefit from the quality of advice available on an individual basis. The department provides well for its gifted and talented students, but needs to ensure that its criteria for identifying such students are sufficiently all-encompassing, and that individual abilities and needs are more fully considered in curriculum planning. Students' aspirations are well catered for in preparation for their interviews and auditions for university or conservatoire entrance. Facilities for music have improved since the previous inspection and are now good, although much of the studio equipment is out of date. The opportunities provided for students socially and

culturally are outstanding. Throughout their time in school, students have frequent opportunities to take part in productions in the Royal Opera House, and, during the inspection, rehearsals were under way for a performance of Bach's mass in B minor, in which parents and friends are also involved, and for which professional soloists and orchestra are engaged. Around 40 concerts and recitals are given each year, and the school's orchestras and bands enjoy a high reputation locally, while the Swing Band has a national reputation. The high quality and intensity of such diverse experiences greatly enriches students' spiritual and moral development and contributes significantly to the ethos of the school.

145. High standards have been maintained since the previous inspection and improvement is good.

### Theatre studies

Overall, the quality of provision in theatre studies is **excellent**.

#### Strengths

- Standards of work seen are well above average.
- The curriculum is greatly enhanced by a very impressive range of activities.
- Students show exceptional enthusiasm, industry and commitment.
- Excellent teaching challenges and inspires students.
- Leadership and management offer clear educational direction and vision.

#### Areas for development

- Increase the number of students taking the courses.
- Provide more opportunities for students to gain experience in the technical side of the subject.

146. Examination results at A-level were well above the national average in 1999 and 2000, but were average in 2001. Similarly, the A/S results in 2001 were only average: however, unvalidated results for 2002 in both examinations indicate a considerable improvement. Standards are again well above average and students' achievement is very good.
147. All students, including those with English as an additional language and with special educational needs, achieve very well. The standard of much written work seen is well above average. Year 12 students, who have just started their course, collaborate well and show very good presentation and interpretative skills. Year 13 personal portfolios are carefully prepared and contain thorough investigations into a wide range of dramatic forms, styles and genres. There is detailed and good quality study and research into historical and social contexts, writers, directors, theatrical conventions and concepts. Performance work is of a high standard and shows a good awareness of staging techniques, conventions and acting skills. Ensemble and teamwork are excellent because students know that they can trust and rely on each other. They are creative and self-critical: they evaluate their work effectively, challenge and support others, and are constantly seeking ways to improve their knowledge, experiences and performances.
148. The theatre studies curriculum is broad and exciting because the courses go well beyond the A/S and A-level syllabuses. Students explore spiritual, moral, ethical, social and cultural issues, such as political corruption and social responsibility, through challenging texts, which include Peter Weiss's 'Marat/Sade' and the works of Gogol, Osborne and Brecht. Students are also able to develop independently through exploring

their own choices of texts for coursework and using the Internet for research. The curriculum is considerably enriched through an outstanding programme of activities which afford students frequent opportunities to perform in school and house productions, see and work with professional actors and directors, participate in workshops, visit theatres and have residential experience. There is, however, no module of planned work that deals specifically with the technical side of theatre studies.

149. Teaching is excellent. Students are inspired and motivated by their teachers and the relationship between them is central to the very good achievement seen. Impressive teacher knowledge and experience of the theatre, clear planning, and the frequent use of exciting and imaginative stimuli in lessons ensure that students are challenged and make very good progress in their understanding of theatrical practice, practitioners and texts from different periods and nations. An excellent example was seen in a lesson in which the spectre of Artaud, created through sound and light, appeared to preside over the students' discussions about his contribution to twentieth century theatre. Teachers also provide superb opportunities for students to develop their acting, directing and evaluative skills and to become creative performers and independent and critical thinkers.
150. The leadership and management of the department are excellent. The department is well organised and resourced, and very good communication and teamwork are engendered through fortnightly team meetings. Regular team teaching and lesson observations promote the sharing of best practice and identification of priorities for future development. The school's bid for Arts College status is clearly identified in departmental development planning. Exciting and thorough new schemes of work, and co-operation with other departments, such as music and history, further augment students' experiences. Students' progress and attainment are monitored very effectively through self and teacher assessments.
151. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Teaching was formerly judged to be very good; it is now excellent. Standards of attainment are improving even further, and the department is looking to develop dance within the already rich curriculum. The expertise, endeavour, enthusiasm, enjoyment, creativity and teamwork found in theatre studies lessons contribute superbly to the school's ethos. The subject is undoubtedly a strength of the school though, at present, comparatively few students opt to take it.

## HUMANITIES

History and geography were inspected. Religious studies was not observed; theology is not offered as an A-level subject and features in only a very limited way within the general studies course and was not being addressed during the inspection week.

### Geography

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

#### Strengths

- A-level examination results are well above average.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- The use of assessment to inform planning is very effective; it raises standards.
- Use of ICT is very good and students use research techniques well to help their learning.

#### Areas for improvement

- Further develop the tracking of students' achievement through the courses.
- Provide support for students who are identified as underachieving in Year 12.

152. A-level examination results are well above national averages. Results have fluctuated recently and with 80 per cent of students achieving the highest grades in 2002 and an average point score of 8.2, this represents an improvement over the figures for 2001, but the results are lower than in 1999 and 2000. Attainment was below expectation at A/S level in 2002. Extra support has been made available for students to improve their grades in enrichment time.
153. Evidence from work seen in lessons, students' files and from discussions with them show that well above average standards are being maintained. Standards seen in lessons in Year 12, where students had just begun their A/S course show rapid progress from GCSE. Students show adaptation to the requirements of the examination in the quality of their answers when presenting researched information about plate margins, for example. In Year 13, students apply well their knowledge and understanding of coastal landforms and processes to maps and photographs of an area of coastline they had not previously studied. They present reasoned arguments as to the formation of these features.
154. Students make good progress throughout Years 12 and 13. Their coursework shows an in-depth knowledge of human and physical processes and the extent to which one process may impinge on another. Findings are properly explained and suitable conclusions are drawn. Maps and diagrams that accompany the work are carefully drawn and the significance of each is explained. The fieldwork has been completed and evidence is used to good effect. The standard of coursework is very high, with students showing high levels of geographic competencies in producing individually planned and researched field-studies, and a high level of understanding in the hypotheses they test and conclusions they draw.
155. The quality of teaching is very good overall, and is a key feature in maintaining standards. A small proportion of teaching is less good, but none is unsatisfactory. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and can illustrate topics with appropriate examples, referring students to relevant text and websites for further background reading. Teachers have high expectations of their students and set a good pace in lessons. They expect their students to follow their example of illustrating work with examples and, to do this, the students make use of their field study experience and

extensive background reading. Teachers have good understanding of the examinations and explain requirements clearly to students, who respond well, are well motivated and have a mature attitude to their work. They benefit from good advice on how to improve the quality of their answers and their essay writing skills. Feedback, in the form of both written comments on assessed work and verbal comments from teachers when work is returned, is treated positively and used as a basis for continual improvement. The students make good use of the opportunities to test themselves and their classmates and benefit from the awareness of marking criteria thus afforded. Teachers make use of ICT facilities in lessons, using an interactive whiteboard and projector linked to a computer when presenting information. They encourage the students to use the Internet for research and to use ICT to enhance the presentation of their work.

156. Where teaching is very good, teachers use assessment well to inform planning. In a Year 12 lesson, for example, the teacher used assessment information from students' research on plate boundaries to inform his planning of future research work. Teachers also encourage students to use their prior knowledge and independent research to find answers. Where teaching is only satisfactory, the teacher talks at too great a length, not giving the students a chance to debate or to find out for themselves.
157. The department has clear direction; it is well led and managed. Results are analysed and data collected informs decisions taken. Because of good evaluations, the quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection, with a reduction in lecturing and an increase in developing more independence in students' learning. There has also been an increase in the use and availability of ICT within lessons and its use is now built into the scheme of work for the A/S course. Overall improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

## History

Overall the quality of provision in history is **very good**.

### Strengths

- Outstanding results at A-level and good achievement characterise provision.
- Very good leadership effectively monitors the department's performance and students' progress.
- Formidable commitment from students leads to very good learning in a variety of collaboratively enriching ways.
- Students' skill in referring to events across different historical periods is very high.

### Areas for improvement

- Extend active participation, acknowledging individual needs.
- Develop ICT for data-handling, source discrimination and independence.

158. History is a popular and successful subject. At A-level in 2001, all students obtained A-E grades, with over two-thirds obtaining A or B grades, almost double the national average. In 2002, the proportion of students gaining A and B rose to over three-quarters. Average points scores continue to rise. Performance at A/S level is also very good. Students outperform predictions based on previous attainment, which represents good achievement. Regular progress reviews, specific and challenging history targets, timely intervention and various revision strategies within and out of class make aspirations attainable. Students scrutinise teachers' marking for keys to improvement. Higher attaining students can enter for the Advanced Extension Award.
159. Standards of work seen during the inspection were very good. The students'

achievements are very good. They evaluate critically a very wide range of evidence, habitually note-making and annotating well. Lack of ICT limits independent discrimination and use of statistical data. Students are strong on speculating, making deductions, referring across time and geography in order to tease out meaning. For example, in a Year 13 lesson about the success of Castlereagh after the Congress of Vienna, students recalled characteristics of several countries across Europe to show how language, culture, social class and geography affect political unification. In essays, they organise astonishing amounts of factual detail, balance conflicting perceptions and clarify hypotheses through strategically placed summary judgements. For example, ending an analysis of the relationship between George III and his Prime Minister, William Pitt the Younger, one student concluded, 'The king knows how to manipulate!'

160. Teaching and learning are both good. In half of lessons they are very good. Learning is accelerated when, for example, students work in pairs on tasks that challenge them to interpret knowledge and formulate a contribution to whole class discussion. Teachers gain immediate insights into specific levels of individual understanding. This is an effective move towards active learning. Where such learning is missing, students become too passive and lose confidence; the teacher has little feedback on individuals' learning. Workshop-style lessons, including the use of 'To what extent...?' type questions, effectively exploit teachers' expert knowledge and humour, drive the pace of note-making, sharpen students' oral skills and confront them to refine perceptions as knowledge builds up. Learning is enriched by two annual conferences; one organised at the National Army Museum, to tap into expertise on war and society, and the other on Bismarck and Napoleon.
161. Focused thinking and action by the relatively new head of department has ensured good improvement since the previous inspection. Performance is well monitored, for example, through data analysis, lesson observations and regular meetings, and action taken to maintain standards. Discussion of teaching styles specially designed for sixth formers is a priority in team meetings, along with ICT, both recently supported by in-service training. A clear development plan, active links with the designated assistant headteacher and governor contribute to very good leadership.

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English, French, German and Latin were inspected.

### ENGLISH

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

The provision in English caters for almost 100 students. GCE A/S and A-level courses are offered in English literature.

#### Strengths

- The standards achieved by students are well above the national average.
- The teachers' subject knowledge is very good.
- Relationships in lessons are very good.
- English makes a very good contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

#### Areas for improvement

- Extend the range of teaching and learning styles within lessons.
- Co-ordinate better the range of learning experiences provided by the teaching team.

162. The results of A/S and A-level examinations have been well above the national average for the last four years, and have improved since the previous inspection. There has been a slight increase in the proportion of students attaining the highest grades over recent years. This achievement represents satisfactory progress for students who begin the course with very high standards of prior attainment. Retention rates are high, and attendance is good.
163. The observation of work during the inspection confirms these well above average standards, particularly in the use of discussion to further understanding, and in close textual analysis. Year 12 students are beginning to use appropriate language of literary criticism. By Year 13, this language is securely embedded, even amongst those students who respond to texts more mechanically, without the intuitive flair of the highest attainers. Students are encouraged from the start to develop a personal view of the studied texts. They are given a sound factual basis for their understanding. By Year 13, they have developed the skills of close analysis of the language and form of a work, and can show how a writer uses these tools to develop meaning. They can also explain how meaning can vary with the differing experience and perspective of the reader, so that they can offer a Marxist view of 'Frankenstein' or redraft 'Little Red Riding Hood' from a feminist perspective. The highest attainers are capable of explaining the effect of single words within a text, showing how the choice of a word can reveal an attitude or prejudice in the writer. By the end of the course, the highest attainers can focus in on detailed analysis of the text, then step back to appreciate the broader picture. When they write about texts they use an examination question as a framework for their own perspective on the work, and write with craft, originality and powerfully managed expression.
164. The achievement of A/S and A-level students is good. They respond to the carefully planned lessons assiduously, though almost half of them are heavily reliant on their teachers for instructions and for information. They work steadily in lessons, though a few lose momentum within lessons where the nature of the activity lacks variety.
165. The teaching of English is good overall. Teachers know their subject very well. They model a scholarly approach, but are not always sensitive to the most successful learning styles of individual students. The planning is very careful, and in the best lessons combines a variety of sharply-timed activities that build and practise skills incrementally. The wide-ranging references enable students to make links between pre-twentieth century classics and contemporary works, and provide a solid grounding in the social and historical contexts of the writing. The pace of lessons is not always high enough to engage students throughout the lesson. This is a disadvantage for lower attainers who lack the skills to reinforce their grasp of new concepts on their own. The best lessons provide a variety of approaches, repeatedly refocusing students to hone their skills. In one A/S level lesson students were introduced to Marxist ideals, and then practised applying a Marxist critique, first to 'Peter Pan' and then to a gothic novel.
166. Students work very effectively in discussion groups where their listening skills are particularly well developed. This enables them to test and revise ideas that are expressed within the group, and so use discussion as a constructive way of deepening understanding. When students work in groups of similar ability, the lower attainers lack the range of skills to sustain their discussion without a written framework or scaffold. Students of all abilities work more effectively within strict time constraints, and with very clear expectations about the outcomes of their discussion.
167. Teachers evaluate both spoken and written contributions effectively, and comments on

written work are very constructive and helpful. There is no consistent policy requiring all teachers to evaluate the success of specific teaching methods for individual students. Performance data are not sufficiently used to identify underachievement, so that evaluation of work does not consistently influence the planning for the next lesson.

168. There is a very clear focus on developing students' appreciation of the social, moral and cultural contexts of the works they are studying. The texts themselves repeatedly challenge students' assumptions about the nature of human existence. This emphasis is promoted by the teachers' commitment to a breadth of study that extends well beyond specific examination texts. It is enhanced by the very strong relationships that have been developed within lessons. The scope of these opportunities has not been formally mapped to ensure that all students have equal access to the full range.
169. Teachers are well qualified, and lessons are predominantly accommodated in a dedicated suite of rooms. Learning resources are sufficient, though teachers have not yet harnessed the full potential of modern technology.
170. Leadership and management of English in the sixth form are satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, improvements have been good. The teaching team has changed substantially, and the department has adopted a wider range of teaching strategies. New syllabuses have been introduced, with radical changes both to the content of the course, and the style of the examination. Every member of the team contributes to the teaching in the sixth form, but their methods and emphases are not sufficiently co-ordinated. The very good practice evident within some lessons is not effectively disseminated nor shared by others in the department. The arrangements to ensure that the large number of candidates meets examination requirements are meticulously implemented.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French and German are taught at A/S and A-level in the sixth form. French regularly attracts significantly more students than German. The introduction of Spanish as a second language in Year 10 is likely to affect provision from 2004 onwards.

### FRENCH

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

#### Strengths

- Teachers' subject knowledge is very good.
- An insistence on accuracy helps to raise standards.
- The purposeful, active use of French in most lessons is a spur to very good learning.

#### Areas for improvement

- The role of the teacher is too often dominant in class discussions.
- Planning to meet the needs of the full range of attainment is underdeveloped.
- There is an absence of clear rules in lessons where students' response is unacceptable.

171. A-level level results were well above average in 2001, as was the proportion of students obtaining the highest grades, A or B. This level of attainment has been maintained every year since the previous inspection. Grades match expectations when comparing them with students' GCSE results; achievement is satisfactory. Teachers are adept at preparing students for examinations. Inspection evidence indicates above average

attainment in the current year groups. Students have respectable accents, although pronunciation when reading aloud from texts is often anglicised.

172. In class discussions, students use language confidently, particularly when concentrating on a narrow range of constructions. The most competent are beginning to manipulate language effectively. Students describe in impressive detail their visit to Boulogne at the beginning of their sixth form studies. When writing about this, they betray a tendency to translate word for word.
173. After a year on the course, students express their views more idiomatically and the best develop a sustained argument. When debating 'nationality' they were able to express viewpoints about issues such as 'tradition' and 'globalisation' using a good range of vocabulary and grammatical structures. Although all students make some errors, most usually convey their point of view persuasively. This feature is also evident in extended writing, which is undertaken regularly. Mature approaches to topics such as 'Égoïsme' vigorously tackle issues such as intolerance. An able student wrote sensitively about the pain and joy of growing up. Essays benefit from the teachers' insistence on accuracy. Intensive practice on specific elements of language pays dividends. All verb forms, for example, are covered systematically. Some grammatical errors are currently evident in Year 12 written work, which is marked punctiliously to aid improvement.
174. Reading skills are well developed, and levels of understanding in comprehension tasks are good. The more mature students also produce cogent resumé on controversial events. Students are able to describe the techniques they employ in listening tasks, but no aural exercises were undertaken in the lessons observed.
175. Students contribute significantly to the success of most lessons. They enjoy their studies, appreciate challenge and support one another admirably. They regularly ask probing questions to further their own understanding and love to debate issues. Occasionally, some students drift into passive acceptance as their more voluble classmates dominate proceedings. Students in Year 12 are still adjusting to open-ended questioning and some resort too readily to English. In one lesson, the response by some students in this group was unacceptable. The authority of the teacher was challenged and learning gains were unsatisfactory.
176. Teaching varies from very good to unsatisfactory. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. All teachers know their subject well and use French as the means of communication almost exclusively. In almost all lessons, students' contributions are valued and expectations are consistently high. In a very good lesson a sense of discovery was generated as the teacher encouraged students to use alternative structures to present their views. In less effective lessons, there is a tendency for teachers to dominate discussions and to ask questions requiring simple, factual answers. In the unsatisfactory lesson, the teacher was unable to curb the scornful response of a group of students. The best practice recognises that there is a spread of ability in teaching groups, and plans effectively to meet those needs. Homework is relevant and is set regularly.
177. The recently appointed head of modern foreign languages is committed, perceptive and hardworking. She has good and firmly held views about how to improve further the effectiveness of the department. Timetabling arrangements have been improved and teamwork is being developed. There is still some way to go before all departmental members embrace a unified approach to teaching methodology. The establishment of priorities is being achieved through negotiation and discussion. Rigorous evaluation of

targets and moderation of internal marking are not yet embedded in the working life of the department. Useful assessment strategies have been introduced recently in French. These 'independent learning schemes' provide a stimulating opportunity for self-evaluation. ICT is not embedded in the schemes of work. The commitment to improving standards is evident in the range of support activities offered by the department, including the Caen exchange.

## GERMAN

Overall, the quality of provision in German is **satisfactory**.

### Strengths

- Teachers' subject knowledge is very good.
- Students' positive contributions to lessons help to raise standards.
- Careful lesson preparation helps students to follow the work.

### Areas for improvement

- Approaches to teaching lack uniformity; there is a lack of variety in question and answer sessions; students are not encouraged sufficiently to offer viewpoints and to form judgements.
- Strategies for the teaching of literature are underdeveloped.
- The subject lacks some rigour in the way targets and marking are evaluated for their helpfulness in raising standards.

178. There has been a gradual decline in A-level results over the past four years. Based on current standards in lessons, students are likely to obtain grades C or D, rather than A or B, which was the norm in 1999. The current Year 13 group is larger than in recent years, although several left the course after one year, when A/S results covered the full range of grades and were about average. There were no entries for A-level in 2001.

179. The standards of work seen in Year 12 are average. Achievement is satisfactory, but the students are still struggling to fuse the varied elements of language when required to practise a new structure. For example, there is still confusion over adjectival endings, plural formation and the use of cases after prepositions. All students in this small group understand the function of modal verbs, but have yet to master usage in subordinate clauses. They are able to incorporate comparatives and superlatives when offering opinions. In a good lesson, they benefited from the teachers' thoughtful preparation to recognise key elements from a listening exercise dealing with advertisements. They also displayed a reasonable knowledge of various regions in Germany. Students contribute well to their own learning, making notes independently, and being prepared to 'have a go'. The good relationships forged with their teachers promotes this sense of partnership in lessons. The active use of constructions presented in previous lessons supports progress. The use of 'man' later in the inspection week reflected the emphasis placed on it in an earlier lesson. Accents are reasonable in conversation, but anglicised when reading from text.

180. Students in Year 13 have benefited from regular, intensive practice of key structures, which they have incorporated into a broad range of extended writing and speaking. Standards observed are slightly above average but achievement is only just satisfactory, as attainment does not match the overall potential of students. The most competent students are willing to tackle complex structures, whilst others tend to 'play safe'. In a good lesson about the recent elections in Germany, students teased out the key issues and indicated a keen awareness of the basic tenets of the main political parties. There is a wide range of speaking skills in the group. The best students are

prepared to risk making mistakes – which they do, particularly with word order and agreements – in order to transmit their viewpoints. The more uncertain students too often remain on the fringes of the lesson.

181. Occasionally, over-ambitious extended writing becomes tortuous. In the main, students try to write accurately within reasonable grammatical parameters. Descriptions of the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks were particularly well constructed. They clearly enjoy imaginative writing. Comprehension often involves authentic extracts and is generally tackled successfully.
182. The quality of teaching is satisfactory with some good features. Teachers are well prepared and often prepare their own resources. They provide good role models and German is used extensively in all lessons. Teachers are keen to promote the use of idiom. There is a tendency to accept the first answer offered in question and answer sessions. This leads to domination by more outgoing students who warm to any intellectual challenge that their response generates. Weaker students' viewpoints are not fully explored. There is a determination to offer students regular, individual practice to address this issue.
183. Vocabulary is tested regularly. Homework is a priority, although some students express the view that it is not always relevant. Marking concentrates on grammatical errors as well as content and is valued by students. During the inspection no lessons dealt with literature. However, recent test results indicate that a review of teaching strategies in this area is a priority.
184. Leadership and management by a hardworking recently appointed head of department are satisfactory. She has good and firmly-held views about how to improve effectiveness further. Those who teach German in the sixth form do not have specific managerial responsibilities in the subject and there is still some way to go before a unified approach to teaching is established. Rigorous evaluation of targets and moderation of internal marking are not yet integrated into practice. A range of support activities includes a visit to Berlin.

## LATIN

Overall, the quality of provision in Latin is **very good**, with a number of excellent features.

### Strengths

- Standards of attainment are very good: higher attaining students are on course to gain grades A and B at A-level, while lower attainers attain at least in line with expectations.
- Almost all the teaching is very good or excellent; teachers have excellent subject knowledge and very good marking shows students how they can improve.
- The department is exceptionally well led and managed.
- Pupils are highly motivated, reflective, and self-directed learners.
- Learning is improved by excellent enrichment learning opportunities such as visits to Greece and Italy.

### Area for improvement

- The excellent use of questioning seen in most lessons is not consistent across the whole department.

185. Overall, standards are well above average. The department has an excellent policy of making Latin study at A-level open to all; increasing numbers of students are studying it. Well above average proportions of students have obtained A and B grades since

1999, exceeding the national average. Very good teaching strategies have helped students with lower prior attainment to achieve at least in line with expectations (as do those with special educational needs and those for whom English was not their first language). There is no obvious difference in attainment by ethnic background.

186. Students make consistently good progress during the two-year course. They acquire a thorough grounding in Latin grammar and syntax. They can confidently identify perfect passive participles, subjunctives, and historic presents, and can differentiate between gerunds and gerundives. They understand why authors adopt various styles to communicate mood or to fit the metre. They have an increasingly wide Latin vocabulary, and can read Latin passages aloud with meaning. From an early point in Year 12, they begin to develop an exceptional ability to comment critically on the content of what they read. By the end of Year 13, nearly all students have acquired a very well grounded understanding of Latin language, culture and literature.
187. Teaching and the students' attitudes are the main factors in the high attainment. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, and in almost all cases enthuse the students with their commitment. Teachers have very high expectations, and lessons are almost all rigorous in the demands placed on students. Teachers have developed very good strategies to clarify the structure of the Latin language, showing students how to scan often syntactically complex sentences in Ovid or Tacitus in order to identify the words which carry significance. This has the effect that, by not labouring over each less important word, students more quickly understand the meaning. Instead they can focus their creative thinking on the authors' poetic intent, or on the emotional impact of the author's use of words or word order. The high quality of some of the students' literary criticism reflects their increasing competence in translation. For instance, Year 12 students interpreted with much insight the various levels that can be seen in Catullus' poem about Lesbia's sparrow. Because of the focus on the literature itself, going beyond their good understanding of the structure of the language, students are able to reflect on how human emotions, as expressed in Latin literature, are relevant or affect them; this strongly supports their personal development. The use of questioning is a particularly strong feature in most lessons; this has the effect of challenging students, both by insisting on accuracy regarding the precise meaning conveyed by tenses or cases, and by insisting they work out the meaning of text by themselves. Teaching reinforces students' independent thinking and the habit of taking responsibility for their own learning. Teachers' marking plays an important part in promoting standards. It is regular and thorough, leaving students in no doubt as to how they are progressing. A significant feature is the very good use of formative comment, which enables students to reflect on how they can improve.
188. Students have excellent attitudes to Latin. They respond with great enthusiasm to the teaching they receive. They challenge, confidently and appropriately, what they see, whether an incorrectly printed text or an attitude of a Latin author (to slaves, or women) which is unacceptable in today's thinking. Their capacity to work in pairs or small groups, and to carry out personal research, as well as to take succinct notes during direct teaching, has a very positive effect on their progress.
189. The department is exceptionally well led. The head of department's vision of the value of Latin and its place in the school is successfully implemented in his day-to-day management. An excellent programme of enrichment activities supports a very broadly based exposure to Latin language and culture. Visits to Roman sites and to museums in England are complemented by visits to Greece and Italy. These have the effect of vividly bringing the past alive, and of consolidating students' learning, with a direct, positive impact on standards. The very good use of ICT enables both lower attaining

students to understand Latin language structure more easily and all students to produce completed work of the highest quality. Overall, there has been good progress since the previous inspection.