

INSPECTION REPORT

TORQUAY BOYS' GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Torquay

LEA area: Torbay

Unique reference number: 113556

Headteacher: Mr R Pike

Reporting inspector: Mr R Allan
19278

Dates of inspection: 3 – 6 March 2003

Inspection number: 249573

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
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Male
School address:	Shiphay Manor Drive Torquay
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr B. Wills-Pope
Date of previous inspection:	27 th January 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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30563	J. Pentlow	Team inspector	Biology; religious studies	
7871	J. Mackie	Team inspector	Physics; chemistry	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students? How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents and students?
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Torquay Boys' Grammar School is a specialist language college, recognised as a beacon school, for boys aged 11 to 18. With 1018 pupils, it is about the same size as other secondary schools. Virtually all pupils are of white-UK origin. There are a few for whom English is an additional language; none of these is in the early stages of learning English. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is low. Less than one percent of pupils and students have been identified with special educational needs. The main categories catered for currently are: pupils with emotional or behavioural difficulties, hearing impairment and physical disabilities. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is well below the national average. Overall attainment on entry is well above average but spans a wider range than most similar grammar schools, from broadly average to very high. The school selects pupils from a very wide area, from Plymouth to Exeter and areas of Dartmoor.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Torquay Boys' Grammar School is a very good school with several outstanding features. Pupils and students attain very high standards because the school provides very effective teaching that builds on their excellent attitudes so that their learning is very productive. Excellent leadership and very good management ensure that very high standards are sustained. The school makes a very significant contribution to the local community and other schools through its activities as a language college and beacon school; it gives an outstanding level of care for its pupils and is held in the highest regard by parents. Overall it provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Overall standards are very high; attainment is very high and pupils make very good progress.
- The standard of teaching is very high throughout the school.
- The pupils and students have outstanding attitudes that contribute significantly to their very effective learning.
- The headteacher provides excellent leadership and, with key staff, manages the school very well.
- The school provides scrupulously for the welfare of pupils and students.

What could be improved

- Not all teachers provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to think for themselves.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in January 1997, the school has made good progress in raising standards and dealing with areas for improvement. GCSE results have risen at a more rapid rate than schools nationally and the quality of teaching has improved. The governing body, headteacher and senior managers are well aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Their own evaluations closely reflect the findings in this report and they have the capacity to improve further.

STANDARDS

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

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
GCSE examinations	A*	A*	A*	A
A Levels/AS Levels	-	A*	§	

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

§ At the time of publication of this report, the national statistics for A/AS level examinations were not available. Hence, a comparison of the school's results could not be made; however, the results were higher in 2002 than 2001.

Overall A Level results in 2001 were very high: within the top 5% of schools nationally. In almost all subjects results were well above average. The exceptions were computer studies where results were above average, and German where the results were average. 2002 A Level results showed clear improvements in business studies, chemistry, economics, German, history and mathematics. Results in computing showed considerable improvement; those in geography were lower than in 2001 and other subjects were broadly the same. In comparison with their GCSE performance two years earlier, the students' achievement in the sixth form is very good overall.

In 2002, GCSE results were very high, within the top 5%, when compared to schools nationally. The school has improved its very high standards at a greater rate than other schools. These results exceed the school's own targets and reflect very high expectations. In comparison with similar grammar schools, the school's results are well above average, with all pupils achieving 5 or more grades of A* to C. Pupils make outstanding progress and achieve very well in Years 10 and 11. In all subjects, results were significantly above average. Particular strengths were in English and religious education. Results in history, geography and physical education, whilst high, were not so high as other subjects.

In the national tests for fourteen-year-olds in 2002 (Key Stage 3 standard assessment tests), results were also very high, within the upper 5% of schools nationally. The trend in results in recent years has been in line with schools nationally. When compared with results in schools with pupils (including girls) who were of a similar standard at the age of eleven, the school's results are above average. They are higher in mathematics and science than they are in English, reflecting the national pattern where boys do not do as well as girls in English. Overall, pupils make very good progress and achieve very well in Years 7 to 9.

Standards of work seen during the inspection were well above average overall. Pupils and students are making very good progress and doing better than pupils in other schools who have similar prior attainment. As the school provides particularly efficient preparation for tests and examinations, results are at least as high and often higher than the standards evident in current work.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils are very enthusiastic about school and show an outstanding commitment to learning. A very high proportion stay on into the sixth form and complete their courses very successfully.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good both around the school and in lessons, with very few exceptions.
Personal development and	Excellent relationships are evident in almost all areas of school life.

relationships	Generally pupils and students show exceptional levels of maturity.
Attendance	Excellent. Attendance is very high in comparison with schools nationally.

Almost without exception pupils and students work in very close harmony with each other, their teachers, other staff and visiting speakers. This is evident in lessons and in the extra-curricular activities that they enjoy together. Only in lessons with insufficient opportunities for independent thought and learning by pupils are their responses blunted.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 9	Years 10 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Very good	Very good	Very good

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

Teaching is consistently very effective in the main school and the sixth form. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen and hardly any that was not at least good. Teachers draw on their outstanding subject knowledge to enrich their lessons throughout the school.

Teaching is particularly efficient in Years 10 and 11 when learning is outstanding. In those years, pupils' excellent attitudes combine most productively with consistently very good or excellent teaching. In the best lessons, teachers integrate several important objectives very imaginatively. This promotes exceptional levels of learning and personal development. In those lessons where pupils' learning is less efficient, pupils are not required to think sufficiently for themselves. In their efforts to ensure that pupils reach the highest standards in GCSE examinations, some teachers overlook the importance of providing pupils with time to reflect on their learning and deepen their understanding.

Excellent teaching was seen in English, mathematics, physics, Spanish, French, art, history, computing, physical education and business studies; very good teaching was evident in chemistry, biology, technology, geography and music. In the sixth form, teachers show great enthusiasm for their subjects. This stimulates students to invest considerable intellectual effort in their studies. Consequently, many students acquire both understanding and specialist vocabulary particularly well so that they can articulate well-reasoned arguments in discussions.

Teaching of skills of literacy and numeracy is excellent so that pupils' standards in these areas are outstanding. Teaching is very sensitive to the needs of all the pupils so that those with special educational needs and those with particular talents almost always make very good progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is very good and enriched with a very extensive range of additional activities.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Excellent. The school goes to exceptional lengths to identify the individual needs of all its pupils and students so that it can help any who are encountering difficulties in their learning.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and	The school makes very good provision for the personal development of all its pupils and students.

cultural development	
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides exceptional levels of care for its pupils and students.

National Curriculum requirements are supplemented well with business studies and additional modern languages for example. The school makes excellent provision for pupils' and students' extra-curricular activities. The sixth form curriculum benefits from efficient collaboration with the girls' grammar school so that some minority preferences, such as classical civilisation, are well catered for. The school makes very good provision for pupils' personal development. They reinforce their very good teaching programmes by arranging for regular, valuable contributions from outside speakers. The ways in which the school provides for the individual needs of pupils and students is one of its particular strengths. This gives all pupils considerable equality of opportunity and helps them overcome such barriers to their learning as arise, whether in the short term or over longer periods.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides excellent leadership and, along with a strong senior team, manages the school very well.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is well informed and purposeful. Governors take care to fulfil their responsibilities very well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school is well aware of its strengths and relative weaknesses. Results are carefully monitored and evaluations are prudent.
The strategic use of resources	The school has made imaginative use of a variety of sources of grant to promote its well-defined objectives successfully.

The headteacher and governing body give a very clear lead to ensure that the school achieves and sustains very high standards. The headteacher and other managers initiate and maintain very effective procedures to pursue its many innovative activities very well. Managers base decisions on good information often gathered from wide consultation, including pupils, students, parents and partner establishments. The school takes its special responsibilities as a leading educational institution in the wider community very seriously. It is taking an important lead in bringing these together on a national and international scale. The school strives to spread the benefits to as many pupils and students as practicable. The school has used the additional funds available to it through government initiatives very well and applies the principles of best value to exceptional effect.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children are expected to work hard. • Good teaching that inspires their children. • The good progress that their children are making. • The school is well led and managed. • The wide range of additional activities provided by the school. • They feel comfortable in approaching the school, which works closely with them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework that their children receive. • How closely the school works with them.

Parents hold the school in exceptionally high regard which the inspection findings justify. Although the amount of homework is a concern for some parents, it is only rarely shared by pupils or students. There

are occasions when some teachers do not follow the school guidance closely and the burden of homework on pupils becomes uneven. Some parents have not been made aware of matters of concern to them as early as they would have liked or have remained in doubt due to lack of clarity in some communications. These instances are very rare and always dealt with expeditiously when the school is alerted to the circumstances.

ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM

TORQUAY BOYS' GRAMMAR SCHOOL

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The school has a well-established sixth form. With over 270 students, it is of above average size. Like the main school, its students are predominantly of white-UK origin with very few for whom English is an additional language and with none at the early stage of learning English. Very few have special educational needs and none has a statement of special educational need. The proportion of students who are eligible for free school meals is well below the national average for secondary schools with sixth forms but above the average for grammar schools. The school currently offers a wide range of A Level courses: 27 including general studies. All students are expected to study a modern language for one year. There are no vocational courses offered. Some courses are run collaboratively with the neighbouring girls' grammar school. Most students join the sixth form from Year 11; about 10% join from other schools. Students following A Level courses have above average GCSE qualifications. Almost all students move on successfully to higher education.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The school has a very good and cost effective sixth form. A Level results are very high and showed an improvement from 2001 to 2002. The combination of very good teaching with students' very positive attitudes to their studies makes provision very effective so that they make very good progress and achieve very well. Both leadership and management of the sixth form are very good so that it provides very well for students' interests and aptitudes.

Strengths

- A Level results are very high and students' achievement is very good.
- Teaching is consistently very good, often with excellent features.
- Leadership and management are very good.

What could be improved

- By increasing the opportunities for independent learning, whilst maintaining high standards, students would be better prepared for higher 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
Mathematics	Very good. A Level results are regularly well above average and the subject is a popular choice for sixth form students. The students

	respond to the very good teaching from highly expert teachers by working hard and showing a great commitment to their studies.
Chemistry	Very good. The very good teaching, underpinned by dynamic leadership, is enabling the students to achieve very well and make very good progress. Standards are well above national expectations.
Biology	Very good. The very good teaching enables a very high level of discussion to take place, leading to levels of attainment that are well above the national average.
Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Physics	Very good. Standards are well above national expectations and students are making very good progress as a result of very effective teaching from an experienced and enthusiastic team.
Business studies	Very good. Standards continue to improve. Teaching is very good. Leadership and management are very effective, providing a setting in which students are able to achieve their full potential.
Computer studies	Very good. Standards are improving. Teaching is of a very high standard. Leadership and management are very good; together they have established an environment in which students can achieve their full potential.
Physical education	Very good. Results for A Level Sports Studies are well above the national average as a result of very good teaching, high expectations and excellent relationships. Students are highly motivated.
Art	Very good. Examination results are well above average and improving. Very good teaching and a very creative ethos in the very well-led department promote very good achievement.
History	Very good. Very good teaching, offering some exceptionally high challenges to students underlies the very good progress that they make to reach very high standards overall.
Religious studies	Very good. The very good teaching and high motivation of the students is resulting in high levels of attainment which are well above the national average.
English	Very good. Very good teaching builds on the excellent foundations provided by standards at GCSE, to achieve high standards at A Level. This is promoted by very effectively led and managed teamwork.
French	Very good. The leadership and teaching of French A Level are very good, enabling students to progress very well and achieve high standards academically and in their personal development.
German	Very good. Students make good progress and achieve above average standards as a result of stimulating and broad-ranging teaching, which encourages academic and personal development.

Overall standards of work seen in other subjects show that students make very good progress and sustain the high standards expected on the basis of their GCSE results. Very good teaching was seen in economics and classical civilisation. Good teaching was seen in media studies, design and

technology, general studies, government and politics, geography, psychology and personal, social and health education.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Staff support students very well. Guidance on higher education choices is particularly strong. Students' preparation for independent study is not as effective as other areas of preparation for the next stage of their education. Procedures for promoting good attendance are excellent.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The sixth form is very well led and managed. Thorough planning, efficient collaborative provision and its monitoring ensure that the opportunities open to all students are very good.

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"> • They are well taught and challenged. • Teachers are helpful and accessible. • The choice of courses provided by the school. • The good range of additional activities provided by the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extent to which the school listens and responds to their views. • The advice that they receive on careers. • Being treated more as young adults. • Support in dealing with personal problems.

Overall, students hold the school in justifiably high regard, very much appreciating the very good opportunities that it offers them. A significant minority genuinely feel that consultations with them lack serious intent. Others, whilst not expressing so strong a view, none-the-less feel that their views carry little weight. The inspection team considers that the school does earnestly seek to take full account of students' views and accommodate them as far as possible without compromising its core values. More effective clarification of some decisions might reduce the unhelpful perceptions held by some students.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Standards are very high; attainment is very high and achievement is very good.

1. Results in National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 and in A Level examinations at the end of Year 13 are very high in comparison with schools nationally.
2. Those pupils who enter the school at the age of 11 already having reached very high levels of attainment or who are otherwise talented, as in art for example, are quickly identified. They are taught very well so that they make very good progress to reach or maintain high standards. Those pupils of more modest prior attainment, for example those in each intake who have attained broadly average standards, are also taught very well. They make very good progress so that by the end of Year 11 they also achieve very well and their results compare very favourably with pupils in more selective grammar schools.
3. Generally, students in the sixth form attain very high A Level results. Their average point score in 2001 was exceptionally high. There are as yet no published national data for comparisons with schools nationally in 2002 to be made but students' average point score was higher than the previous year. As GCSE results are already very high, there is little capacity for the school to demonstrate further improvement in comparison. An independent check of students' attainment compared to their aptitude shows that they achieve very well in Years 12 and 13.
4. Outstanding work was seen in Years 10 and 11, particularly in English, mathematics and science.
5. Many examples of highly creative and imaginative work show the wide range and exceptional quality of writing that pupils produce for GCSE English. In one case, the pupil drew on both contemporary and historical perspectives to compare characters in *Lord of the Flies* to political figures, justifying his argument well with careful reference to the text. The wide range of attainment evident in Year 7 is clearly narrowed by Year 9 when there is little difference in the high quality of pupils' written work on Shakespeare. The regularity with which teachers set challenging work and mark it very well clearly drives up standards.
6. Very high levels of presentation in mathematics show clearly the refinements in reasoning that pupils have acquired by Year 11. This is just as evident in graphical analysis, algebraic processing and statistical calculation as it is in geometrical justifications and proofs. This work is firmly based on the thorough teaching and rapid work rate evident in the books of younger pupils.
7. In biology, pupils show exceptional understanding and highly developed abilities to apply their knowledge. For example, they can use technical terms correctly and very competently to explain the reasons for varying rates of photosynthesis. Similarly, exceptional work is readily found in physics and chemistry, such as that involving the application of molar masses to calculate rates of reaction. High levels of understanding are clearly evident in experimental work related to crystallisation of magnesium sulphate and the related calculations.
8. Pupils and students reach very high standards of personal development. Parents notice their maturing attitudes, as younger pupils rapidly flourish in the very supportive environment of the school. The provision for religious education is closely integrated with that of personal, social and health education, citizenship and careers education so that pupils' personal development is cultivated very effectively. Teachers make programmes very real for pupils through the close links with issues that are important to them. For example, in considering the consequences of drug abuse, in developing knowledge and understanding of medical conditions and in becoming better prepared for life in a multi-cultural society, pupils can relate their learning to contexts with which they are familiar. In this way, pupils and students learn very well and can reflect thoughtfully on the choices they make, taking the school's lessons into careful consideration. Through the

extensive healthy eating initiative, pupils and students understand the implications of different dietary choices very well. Older pupils, especially the sixth form students, are very articulate and knowledgeable concerning social and moral issues. They can assert contrary views and debate very rationally, showing very mature insights.

The standard of teaching is very good throughout the school.

9. In Key Stage 3 (Years 7 – 9), Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11) and the sixth form, teaching is very good. During the inspection no unsatisfactory teaching was seen and in almost all lessons, it was at least good. The high level of consistently good or very good teaching is the most significant factor in the very good achievement of pupils and students.
10. Teachers are experts in their subjects. They convey enthusiasm and enrich their teaching with many examples drawn readily from their deep knowledge and experience. In a mathematics lesson, a pupil asked about the origin of the standard formula for the general solution of the quadratic equation. Without losing any of the momentum of the lesson, the teacher not only answered the original question but excited the curiosity of the class with reference to other historical sources, leaving them with a supplementary task, to search the internet for information on the tragic death of Evariste Galois. In modern language lessons, by skilfully conducting very considerable periods in the target languages, a practice with which some pupils are clearly familiar, very rapid learning follows. Such was the level of proficiency evident in a Year 7 Spanish lesson that it was hard to believe that the pupils had started their studies only 6 months earlier.
11. Teachers use questions to probe pupils' understanding and stimulate their thinking to a very high degree. In an excellent Year 11 lesson, as a result of the very skilful way that the teacher questioned pupils and guided their discussion of a poem, they produced thoughtful and well-articulated analyses. Whilst giving due prominence to the important skills of examination techniques, the teacher altogether precluded any set response. By encouraging individual interpretations and their justifications from pupils the teacher was able to show them how they might write about them very convincingly. Furthermore, the teacher encouraged pupils to speak fluently and with confidence thereby deepening their understanding of the emotional bonds created between mother and daughter as well as contributing very significantly to their personal development.
12. The most effective teaching is characterised by very clear distinctions between the activities to be undertaken in the lesson and the learning that is intended as a consequence. This enables pupils to focus their efforts most productively. This was the case in an excellent lesson on taxation systems. After pupils had worked together clarifying business terminology, they were able to give technical explanations, sometimes without reference to notes, for extended periods. The teacher encouraged their different points of view and used them very well through discussions to summarise the main objectives of the lesson.
13. Very good teaching promotes high levels of personal development. The school's personal, social and health education programme is taught very well. By firmly establishing pupils' personal ambitions for their lives as a starting point, a teacher skilfully drew from pupils the dangerous obstacles to their achievement posed by even casual involvement with drugs. The teacher created powerful opportunities for personal reflection through the example of Leah Betts and very sensitively handled pupils' clear concerns about the impending war. Teaching is supplemented very well by the extensive contributions of guest speakers from a wide range of outside organisations. Some valuable contributions to preparing pupils and students for living in a society enriched by cultures very different from the local community arise from the productive links that the school is forging with schools in urban Britain and other countries.

Pupils and students have outstanding attitudes that contribute significantly to their very effective learning.

14. Pupils have excellent attitudes towards learning. This has a very significant impact on their progress and achievement. They are highly motivated, so invest considerable intellectual, creative or physical effort, concentrate for extensive periods, listen very carefully to instructions and readily rise to the very high expectations their teachers have of them. They are able to work reliably and collaboratively and are very keen to participate, as in the music lesson where pupils discussed the life of Rossini enthusiastically. Pupils are self-motivated and take a pride in their work. They arrive promptly at the start of the day and work diligently, whether unaided or supported by their teacher. Pupils are courteous to visitors with whom they conduct themselves very well, demonstrating a real pride in their school. They are eager to explain their views about the school and why they think it is such an outstanding place in which to learn. The youngest pupils said they had settled very well and particularly liked the way that teachers continually challenge them without causing them to lose their enjoyment of learning.
15. Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around the school is excellent. They listen well in lessons, are very keen to answer questions, to share their work and to take part in any way that is required of them. Pupils move around the school in a calm and orderly manner. The school is a harmonious community based on trusting and respectful relationships in which everyone is valued and made to feel that they matter. The contribution made by all members of school is valued, and this has a significant impact and results in positive attitudes, secure relationships and a very effective learning environment. Some older pupils and a minority of students do not feel as strongly as others that their views are taken seriously when major decisions are being made. Whilst these pupils and students are less positive than others, they are nonetheless full of praise for what the school is doing for them and very proud of their school.
16. Establishing good relationships and building on good attitudes are integral to the school's aims and its ethos. The behaviour policy, which was written by teachers, parents, governors and pupils, underpins the school's harmonious atmosphere. There are excellent relationships between pupils and teachers, and between pupils themselves. Not only do these features play a significant part in the very good progress pupils and students make in lessons, but they promote a very high degree of personal development. The school encourages pupils to become involved in the life of the local community for example, by helping out at a local respite care centre. The school jazz band recently performed at a fund raising event for a local hospice, and the choir sings for elderly citizens at Christmas. One pupil with a medical problem has started a support group for similarly afflicted schoolchildren, and is hoping to start a country-wide support group in the near future.
17. Attendance at the school is excellent, and there are no unauthorised absences. There is good liaison with the education welfare officer who visits the school fortnightly. Pupils are generally punctual and work begins quickly, which has a positive impact on attainment.

The school provides scrupulously for the welfare of pupils and students.

18. The effective support and advice for all pupils, and the caring attitude of staff are strengths of the school. There is a strong ethos which promotes good behaviour, good working relationships and a safe learning environment. Parents and pupils comment very positively on the support and guidance the school provides. The pastoral support tutor leads a very dedicated team of year pastoral heads and tutors, and the house system gives further support in many ways, both academic and sporting. Pupils spoken to particularly enjoy the competitive sporting events which take place between the school's five houses. The pastoral curriculum provides many planned opportunities for personal development.
19. The school makes excellent provision for the welfare of all its pupils, who are well known to all adult members of the school. Pupils who joined the school last September spoke highly of their induction procedures and said how much they valued relationships between their form tutors and subject tutors. Pupils spoken to during the inspection were confident that they would receive helpful support and guidance should they need it. Underachievement triggers quick response with additional support from teachers.

20. The behaviour and attendance of individual pupils is carefully monitored by heads of house. There are excellent attendance procedures, and the attendance policy is effectively promoted throughout the school. Registers are monitored daily, and results are placed on the school's computer system. The school liaises well with the education welfare officer about attendance and a range of welfare issues. The school has clear policies to promote good behaviour and to maintain discipline, which are known to pupils, parents and teachers. The anti-bullying code appears on walls throughout the school and in all classrooms. Pupils spoken to during the inspection said with confidence that they would know who to approach if there was a problem.
21. The school makes strenuous efforts to keep up to date with the personal and academic circumstances of its pupils and students. In this way, whatever barriers to pupils' or students' learning or personal development might exist or arise, relevant school staff can take very effective steps to help pupils and students overcome them.
22. The provision for the relatively small number pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is very good and is an integral part of the school's commitment to raising achievement for all. The school has an extensive, dedicated system for identifying and supporting SEN pupils and there is a clear and effective system for gathering and communicating information to subject staff. Staff make good use of the formal and informal links to communicate concerns to the staff responsible for SEN and the Provision for Individual Needs (PIN) arrangements. The needs of individual pupils are closely monitored and appropriate; specific strategies are put in place to ensure they not only do not fall behind with their academic studies, but also that they feel safe and valued at school. The two staff responsible for these arrangements provide a level of personal care and attention to individual pupil needs, as well as access to themselves, which is both impressive and very much appreciated by parents and pupils.
23. Several pupils with a history of long-term absence or with phobias about school have been brought back into the school's mainstream curriculum with carefully prescribed individual education plans. These have included timetable changes, access to alternative accommodation, personal support in and out of lessons and much patient discussion with pupils to gain their co-operation and restore confidence. These plans have also included very specific guidance to staff on teaching these pupils. Parents and external agencies are regularly consulted and form part of the support structure for all pupils with learning needs. The school is rightly proud of the pupil who developed epilepsy in year 10 and has now gone on to speak to staff in other schools, delivers part of the school PSHE programme and has set up a youth support group. The very successful early support offered to the student by the school has clearly made an impact on the pupil's ability to overcome this dramatic lifestyle change.
24. The health and safety of pupils is given high priority and there is an effective child protection policy. Several members of staff are trained in first aid. The school nurse is also trained in counselling and offers sensitive health advice. The school is cleaned and maintained to a very high standard.

The headteacher provides excellent leadership, and with key staff, manages the school very well.

25. The headteacher, who rightly enjoys an outstanding degree of parental support, has an exceptionally clear view of where the school is going and takes very effective action. He is supported very well by senior colleagues and the governing body. Very good school self-assessment provides the headteacher, governing body and senior managers with an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Current ambition to integrate the beacon, language and citizenship developments is a very imaginative initiative. The school uses its income very productively, with intelligence and prudence and takes its obligations as a beacon school and language college very seriously, contributing to other schools and community ventures well beyond the basic expectations.

26. Very good monitoring of performance and provision has enabled the headteacher and key staff to establish and sustain a good degree of consistently very good teaching which, along with pupils' outstanding attitudes, generates sufficient momentum to minimise the impact of shortcomings. Strenuous efforts to recruit highly expert and committed staff have been very productive so that the school is now very well placed to address its current priorities for improvement.
27. A sustained programme of developments in recent years has provided excellent accommodation, although it is cramped despite careful financial and forward planning. Very good collective worship takes place, with significant opportunities for personal reflection. This was seen in a Gilbert House assembly and in some tutor periods but it is not sufficiently widespread to meet the requirements. Collaboration with the local girls' school is very effective, although some issues of monitoring and timetable co-ordination remain to be resolved.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Not all teachers provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to think for themselves.

28. In a small proportion of lessons, in the main school and the sixth form, some teachers deploy a limited range of teaching methods and, as a consequence, their pupils and students do not develop understanding as well as they might. This is the case in some otherwise very good lessons and indicates how the school might focus efforts to increase the impact of good teaching. For example, not all modern language teachers employ the target language as effectively as in those very successful lessons when it plays such a significant part. In some lessons, teachers do not exploit the opportunities for pupils and students to generate hypotheses before telling them what outcomes of certain actions to expect. In some lessons, the teacher answers pupils' questions well but does not turn them to wider learning opportunities, so the very able are sometimes 'treading water'.
29. In a physical education lesson on the history of sport, the well-prepared and knowledgeable teacher explained clearly how the poor levels of fitness of the British army in the Boer War influenced the content of the sports curriculum in schools. Whilst the teacher successfully engaged students in discussing the issue by asking them specific questions, he did not provide sufficient opportunity for all students to explore the topic from their perspective and to draw their own conclusions based on previously acquired knowledge. Neither did the lesson give the teacher, in what was a good lesson overall, the opportunity to check fully students' understanding of the key points of the lesson.
30. In the sixth form, a high proportion of time is allocated for teaching but it is not always used efficiently. For example, some lessons have little direct teaching, and the lessons are mainly supervised study periods. In some others, students spend time completing exercises that could well be done in private study but have to leave unattempted the more challenging problems for which many would need the guidance and support of a teacher. A managed reduction of teaching time, without jeopardising the very high standards, alongside students' increased effectiveness as independent learners might improve the quality of provision and make the sixth form even more cost-effective.
31. Some pupils and students interpret the very firm direction that the school in general and some teachers in particular provide as a lack of confidence in their trustworthiness to exercise responsible autonomy, for example, in the use of rooms at lunchtimes. In the absence of a clear understanding of the reasoning underlying decisions taken in the school, especially following consultations, some older pupils and students convey a worrying cynicism about their value, believing that the school does not respect their views.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

32. In order to improve further an already very effective school, senior managers and governors should:

- (1) Increase the frequency with which teachers expect pupils to exercise responsibility for their own learning by requiring them to initiate discussion, make suggestions, develop ideas or generate hypotheses.

(see paragraphs 28, 29, 30, 51)

Sixth form

- (1) Increase students' effectiveness as independent learners by extending the use of relevant teaching techniques, or reducing direct teaching where this can be achieved without an adverse impact on standards.

(see paragraphs 68, 72, 73, 78, 83, 88, 96, 115, 121)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	34
	Sixth form	63
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		97

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Years 7 – 11							
Number	5	13	11	5	0	0	0
Percentage	14.7	38.2	32.4	14.7	0	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	6	32	23	2	0	0	0
Percentage	9.5	50.8	36.5	3.2	0	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting the percentages for Years 7 – 11 as each lesson represents almost 3 percentage points. In the sixth form each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
	743	275
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	14	8

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational need	2	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	7	2

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	19

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.7
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	1.2

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	2002	149	0	149

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	148	148	148
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	148	148	148
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	99(99)	99(99)	99(99)
	National	66(64)	67(66)	66(66)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	93(97)	99(98)	98(97)
	National	32(31)	45(43)	33(34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC Level 5 and above	Boys	150	150	147
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	150	150	147
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 5 or above	School	100(100)	97(100)	100(100)
	National	67(65)	70(68)	67(64)
Percentage of pupils at NC Level 6 or above	School	98(99)	97(99)	99(98)
	National	32(31)	44(42)	34(33)

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
	2002	148	n/a	148

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* - C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	148	148	148
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	148	148	148
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	100(99)	100(99)	100(100)
	National	50(48)	91(91)	96(96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	67.9
	National	39.8

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 / AS examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	141	n/a	141
	Average point score per candidate	389.4	n/a	389.4
National	Average point score per candidate	*	*	*

* National comparison data for AS/A Level results in 2002 are not yet available. The points scoring system changed in 2002.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	983	18	1
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	9	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	5	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	11	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	60
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15.7

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	424

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.4
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26.5
Key Stage 4	21.8

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	3 388 945
Total expenditure	3 322 531
Expenditure per pupil	3235
Balance brought forward from previous year	191 184
Balance carried forward to next year	257 598

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	10.38
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	14.36
<hr/>	
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1018
Number of questionnaires returned	448

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	52	42	4	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	70	29	1	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	51	45	2	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	38	51	10	0	1
The teaching is good.	69	30	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	54	40	5	0	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	67	30	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	91	9	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	48	43	7	1	2
The school is well led and managed.	80	19	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	64	33	2	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	67	31	1	0	1

Other issues raised by parents

A very small number of parents were critical of the school's action in communicating its decisions to them following meetings at the school or in responding to issues raised by them. Records indicate that such instances are very rare and when oversights are pointed out, the school addresses these speedily. Some parents expressed concern that their children were not sufficiently well prepared for work experience in Year 10, but pupils questioned expressed no such concerns, although the time allowed for them to make arrangements was short.

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

33. In 2001, the school's results overall in A Level examinations were very high. The average point score was well within the top five percent of that for all students nationally. Only in chemistry were results very high; the school's very high results overall were due to consistently well above average results across almost all subjects. These were art, biology, business studies, communication studies, economics, English literature, French, design & technology, general studies, geography, history, mathematics, music, physics, religious studies and physical education. The only exceptions were computer studies, where results were still above average, and in German where they were average. In other subjects, there were too few entries or validated results for secure statistical comparisons to be made. Relative to their performance in other subjects, students did well in biology, chemistry, English, mathematics and physics; they did less well in computer studies and general studies. Otherwise, there were no significant differences.
34. There are, as yet, no published national data for examinations in 2002. However, compared to the previous year, the results in computer studies were considerably higher; in German they were clearly better, as they were also in business studies, chemistry, economics, history and mathematics. In other subjects they were broadly the same.
35. For schools such as Torquay Boys' Grammar School whose students begin A Level courses with very high levels of prior attainment, there is little scope for further improvement relative to others with similar GCSE results. That they generally maintain the very high levels they have reached earlier represents very good achievement. The school has not set specific targets for A Level results but almost all students reach the levels expected of them and that are consistent with their capabilities.
36. All students embark on AS Level courses but only those students not intending to follow A Level courses were accredited. In 2001, only in mathematics were there sufficient candidates for statistical comparison which showed them to be above the national average.
37. The school makes very good provision in all of the subjects inspected in detail, namely: mathematics, biology, chemistry, physics, business studies, computer studies, physical education, art, history, religious studies, English literature, French and German. Work in economics, classical civilisation, government and politics and media studies was sampled and indicated at least good provision and standards.
38. The school does not accredit students with key skills. They have very high levels of competence in communication, numeracy and ICT that support their very good progress in their other studies.
39. Those very few students who have special educational needs are provided with careful individual attention so that they make correspondingly very good progress.
40. Over 90 percent of Year 11 pupils stay on into the sixth form, attending very regularly. Over 95 percent of them pursue their studies for the whole A Level programme. Over 98 percent of Year 13 continue into higher education.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

41. Students have excellent attitudes that make a considerable contribution to their very effective learning. They enjoy outstanding relationships with their teachers and put the opportunities open to them, both in lessons and at other times, to excellent use to make very considerable personal development.

42. During practical work, the students help each other maturely, to each other's mutual benefit. During a physics lesson on operational amplifiers, students whose circuits were functioning well, readily turned their attention to those of colleagues that were not, thereby deepening their insights into the essential features of the circuits and their components whilst helping their fellow students.
43. Students are very keen to learn. They show a close interest in lessons, making pertinent comments and asking relevant questions in order to refine their understanding, as when discussing management tools for decision making in business studies. They readily invest assiduous efforts to rise to the challenges offered by very good teaching and, when given the opportunities, make leading contributions in lessons, by making confident presentations to their fellow students in French, for example. Students are enthusiastic about sporting activity with a high proportion regularly participating in optional training and games. This was evident even during the very poor weather conditions that prevailed during the inspection when, despite the difficulties, students were persist in striving to improve their levels of performance.
44. Their very co-operative relationships were exemplified during an English lesson in which students discussed a poem about parents' wishes for their children with mature humour but without loss of serious intent to understand its finer meanings. Even in lessons when some immaturity is evident, attitudes are still good so that students respond very well to the teachers' efforts to manage events. Such was the case during a German lesson when some students made 'witty' and mildly distracting comments, in the target language. The teacher skilfully redirected these students so that overall, even these contributions were turned to good effect.
45. Students participate enthusiastically in the very wide range of additional activities arranged by the school outside lesson times. A high proportion engage in active community service and conduct events for the benefit of others, such as musical performances for elderly local residents or helping in nearby care facilities.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

46. Teaching in the sixth form is very good. Students have excellent attitudes to their learning and invest extensive intellectual and creative efforts. Consequently, they learn very effectively and make very good progress in order to sustain the very high standards evident in their GCSE results. Over three-fifths of the teaching seen during the inspection was at least very good; in one lesson in ten it was excellent.
47. Teachers have outstanding knowledge of their specialist subjects and the requirements of the examinations. Not only is this applied to the planning of very effective lessons but it enables them to enrich their teaching by bringing the highest levels of scholarship into the classroom. In history, students were expected to undertake a level of synthesis akin to that required in the first year of university study. In art, the high quality of critical appraisal by the teacher showed students how to give and take criticism enabling them to look very closely at their work and acquire the vision to take it forward. In physical education, the teacher's expertise and excellent management of students stimulated them to the highest levels of response, even in the most challenging weather conditions.
48. Work is very well planned and ICT tools used to very good effect. The close harmony between students' preparation for their analysis of *"La Gloire de Mon Pere"*, the teachers' succinct, clear and attractively prepared resources, and the integration of examination criteria all within a rigorous grammatical framework ensured all students made excellent progress.
49. By asking increasingly probing questions teachers refine students' very high levels of thinking so that almost all of them are able to articulate precisely and fluently. Well-judged follow-up questioning by the teacher made sure that those for whom the work on central processing unit

functions in a computing lesson was very challenging were able to match the very good progress of other students.

50. In those lessons where the teacher's deep understanding, excellent planning, very skilful questioning and management of debate come together with spiritual dimensions, the results are outstanding. This was very clear during a cosmology lesson on features of our galaxy in which both teacher and students showed their profound sense of awe and wonder.
51. Whilst the close structure of many very good lessons is of clear benefit to students, it sometimes stifles their capacity for taking greater responsibility for their own learning. In some cases, lessons are so dominated by the teacher's detailed arrangements and instructions that students play no part in generating hypotheses, for example. There is much good practice, such as that in history and French, where students play a leading role in lively discussions, but there is insufficient of the cut and thrust of debate that characterises excellent sixth form teaching for students' potential for independent learning to be developed efficiently.

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

52. The curriculum in the sixth form offers a very good range of learning opportunities for the students and effectively builds on the provision in Years 10 and 11. The students are given access to a very wide range of A Level courses, which include both traditional and new subjects such as politics, theology and psychology. The provision is closely matched to the needs of the students, the vast majority of whom go on to higher education. There is effective collaboration with the adjacent girls' grammar school, with the result that some courses are taught jointly and others, which are only offered by the girls' school, are open to the boys. In addition, the school is closely linked to other local post-16 providers, which facilitates access to vocational courses for those students who wish to pursue them. These arrangements, which also enable boys who have studied elsewhere to enrol for A Level courses at the grammar school, contribute to the efficiency of the school's provision. Students are given very good advice and guidance on the opportunities available to them and the vast majority are successful in pursuing the courses of their choice. There is little provision for drama, which is a shortcoming.
53. The statutory requirements of the sixth form are met, with good provision for religious education, based on the whole school 'Thought for the Week' programme. Students are very largely provided with very good opportunities to hone their key skills of communication, numeracy and ICT. Whilst there is good practice in some subjects such as religious studies, in others there are not always sufficient planned opportunities for students to take more responsibility for their own learning.
54. The extra-curricular provision is very good, with a very impressive range of clubs and societies open to students. The school has a very strong sporting tradition and over a hundred students took part in some form of extra-curricular sporting activity last year. They value the opportunities provided for them and participate very well. Individual subject departments also enrich their sixth form provision through, for example, theatre trips and visits to continental markets and universities. All of these activities make a valuable contribution to the students' personal and social development.
55. The school expects all students to maintain breadth by following the general studies course in both years. The personal, social and health education programme offers to the students very good opportunities to prepare for their future through topics such as 'survival cookery' and study skills. Students are encouraged to take on responsibilities by representing their peers in the Sixth Form Focus Group, which discusses matters relevant to Years 12 and 13.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

56. Procedures for assessing the students' attainment and progress are very good. Subject teachers and form tutors are provided with details of the students' prior attainment, which helps to inform the starting points for their A Level courses. The students' progress is then carefully tracked through regular assessments and these are recorded on their individual files. There is a rigorous target-setting process with individual meetings between tutors and students where progress to date is discussed and target grades for the future are agreed. The grades are underpinned by a suitable set of actions, which are both attitudinal and subject specific. This process is very largely appreciated by the students and provides good information which departments, form tutors and the head of sixth form can use to monitor and tackle any potential underachievement.
57. Subject teachers know their students very well and provide very good individual support both within and outside lessons. The students receive good feedback on their work and many value the additional time that subject teachers make available to help them with their studies. The comprehensive assessment procedures ensure that form tutors as well as subject teachers have a good understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement of the students in their group. Assessment data is used to inform curriculum planning as evidenced by the introduction of a more challenging ICT course, for example.

Advice, support and guidance

58. All staff linked to the sixth form know their students very well and take a genuine interest in their personal and academic development. Subject teachers and form tutors give unstintingly of their time to support the students by providing advice and guidance on both personal and subject specific issues. The caring attitudes shown by the staff are very much appreciated by the students and contribute to the very positive relationships within the sixth form. The careers advice and guidance provided for the students is comprehensive. The personal contact with staff, including the Connexions adviser, is well augmented by a regular programme of visitors from a wide range of occupations, many of them local, and higher education. The head of sixth form has a very good overview of the students in his care and makes a point of acknowledging good achievements as well as picking up on those students who may not be reaching their full potential. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are very secure and students are very rarely absent although a small number are sometimes late for registration.

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

59. The parents are highly supportive of the work of the school, including the sixth form provision. The school provides parents with a very good range of information about the opportunities that the sixth form offers and the progress that their sons are making. The prospectus is comprehensive and the procedures for applying for entry to the sixth form are clearly laid out. Evening meetings are held to inform parents about the sixth form in Year 11 and to discuss their son's progress once they are in the sixth form. An additional session is held about the opportunities available in higher education. This provides parents with a good overview so that they can support their sons more effectively when they are making decisions about their future. The school also provides a very useful handbook on the sixth form, which includes information about the procedures for entering university.
60. The profiles that are sent home contain clear and valuable information about each student's progress to date and target grades for the future. The actions required for further improvement are well focused and often subject specific. Parents are kept well informed about the importance of AS Levels and there is a clear system for writing to those parents whose sons are giving cause for concern. Parents are also contacted when their son has achieved particularly well.

61. Relationships between students and staff are excellent. The vast majority of students value the opportunities offered in the sixth form and respond very positively to both the personal and academic challenges provided by the school. A small minority, however, feel that any concerns that are raised by them are not always treated sufficiently seriously.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

62. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The head of sixth form, ably supported by his deputy, heads of house and subject leaders, provides clear educational direction and has established very good systems to ensure that the extensive provision for Years 12 and 13 runs smoothly. A strong team of form tutors helps to ensure that communication between staff, students and parents is effective. The students' academic and personal development is provided for very well and their progress is carefully monitored. The arrangements to support students are highly valued by them. Students' and parents' views are sought about the sixth form provision annually and action is taken as a result. For example, some students had found the four AS levels an excessive challenge and so this year, a number of Year 12 students have been advised to take three only.
63. The school uses its resources well, closely balancing its income for the sixth form with its expenditure. The small imbalance in favour of the sixth form over the main school is due to the school's full commitment of resources to sixth form courses even though the income has not been as high as anticipated during the changing funding arrangements. The quality of main school provision has been maintained. The school applies the principles of best value well so that, for example, external consultants have not been able to improve on its resourcing arrangements in recent years. In the absence of reliable data on performance at A Level in 2002, managers have used some imaginative means to evaluate the effectiveness of provision. In the climate of self-challenge, the school continually strives to improve. It has not been the practice to use the comparative data available to compare expenditure patterns with other similar institutions.

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

In the inspection, thirteen 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 2002. [National comparisons are not yet available.]

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	9	27	*	0	*	15.6	*
Chemistry	5	100	*	40	*	42	*
Biology	2	100	*	50	*	45	*
Physics	5	80	*	25	*	30	*
Computing	1	100	*	0	*	40	*
Physical education	1	100	*	100	*	60	*
Art	4	100	*	0	*	35	*
Music	1	100	*	100	*	50	*
Media studies	2	100	*	50	*	40	*
Geography	8	100	*	12	*	36.2	*
History	5	100	*	80	*	48	*
Politics	4	100	*	50	*	45	*
English literature	6	100	*	67	*	46.7	*
French	10	100	*	30	*	40	*
German	1	100	*	100	*	60	*

GCE A Level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	39	100	*	77	*	102	*
Further mathematics	7	100	*	100	*	114	*
Chemistry	32	100	*	69	*	98	*
Biology	36	97.2	*	58	*	91	*
Physics	32	96.9	*	66	*	98	*
Technology	11	100	*	64	*	98	*
Business studies	21	100	*	76	*	104	*

Economics	14	100	*	93	*	111	*
Computing	14	100	*	64	*	99	*
Physical education	18	100	*	61	*	91	*
Art	24	100	*	67	*	96	*
Music	3	100	*	100	*	113	*
Media studies	21	100	*	71.4	*	99	*
Geography	27	100	*	40.7	*	83	*
History	29	100	*	58.6	*	94	*
Religious studies	16	100	*	62.5	*	95	*
Politics	14	100	*	78.6	*	96	*
English	43	97.7	*	58.1	*	94	*
French	13	100	*	53.8	*	92	*
German	13	100	*	53.8	*	86	*
Russian	4	100	*	25.0	*	80	*

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

64. Mathematics, chemistry, biology and physics were inspected in detail.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- A Level results in mathematics and further mathematics are regularly well above average.
- Enthusiastic teaching from highly expert staff generates a confidence in the students, many of whom make very good progress.
- The students are highly committed to the subject; they work extremely hard and are very keen to succeed.
- The subject is very well led and managed with a sharp focus on ensuring that teaching is of a high quality while maintaining the department's traditional core values.

Areas for improvement

- The students' learning and progress would benefit if they were able to undertake research and more extensive tasks and use ICT more consistently.

65. Results at A Level in both mathematics and further mathematics have consistently been well above average and have improved since the last inspection. All students passed in both courses in 2002. The proportion of the students who achieve the highest A and B grades is very impressive and improved in 2002 in comparison with 2001. The students' results in mathematics in 2001 were better than the average of the results in their other subjects. Mathematics is a popular course, which is seen by the students as having high status. A considerable number choose to continue studying mathematics at university. The school regularly has students who move on to study mathematics, or subjects with a large mathematical element at Oxford and Cambridge. One area of concern was the AS Level results in 2002, which were lower than anticipated. Attention has been paid to this and action is being taken to tackle it for the future. The lower results came about largely because the time available before the examination for the final module was short and resulted in lower marks.

66. Teaching is very good overall, within a narrow range of tried and tested styles that have been most effective and make the maximum use of the skills and expertise of the teaching staff. As a result the students learn new ideas and concepts rapidly. The students start the courses with very secure algebra and other skills, enabling them to adapt to the demands of A Level and to make a smooth transition from GCSE. They apply their skills well to support their learning, and practice questions so that new skills are consolidated and understood. For example, Year 12 students applied their knowledge and understanding of Newton's Laws of Motion to help them to evaluate the equation of a projectile. Very effective use of the white board attached to a laptop computer enabled the teacher to demonstrate the effect of changing the angle of elevation of a projectile, and stimulated thoughts about its maximum range. A small group were able to discuss the possible implications of the effect of air resistance on the model they had developed, although this was considerably beyond the requirements of the course at this stage. Standards are similar to the recent examination results and are well above average in both mathematics and further mathematics. The students achieve equally well in the pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics elements of the two courses. They are highly motivated and very keen to succeed. This is exploited well by staff who can drive learning forward at great pace because the students are exceptionally attentive and are willing to complete large quantities of work to extend and consolidate their learning of new ideas. The teachers have a high level of expertise and teach with a genuine interest and enthusiasm for the subject, which they transmit to the students.

67. Much is expected of the students who respond to the demands placed upon them well. Lessons are well planned and activities within them are sequenced to develop their understanding and to build new knowledge in systematic steps. Year 13 students quickly understood the principles of integration by parts because the lesson had been carefully planned to tackle the salient points and the teacher provided tips about the techniques that could be applied to answer problems more effectively. The teachers challenge the students' thinking through probing questions and the students respond not just through their answers but also by posing questions of their teachers when they do not fully understand. This produces a purposeful dialogue and is instrumental in the confidence and fruitful relationships that have been established between staff and students. This was seen to very good effect in a Year 12 lesson as the students were introduced to the binomial theorem through a well thought out investigation. The students were able to see how the coefficients involved are related to the numbers generated in Pascal's triangle. They were able to respond to the teacher's challenge at the end of the lesson by generating the terms in the expansion of $(a+b)^n$ to the power n . Marking is often helpful and is found to be useful by the students. They value the guidance given and the availability of staff to help them when they are having difficulty with the work that they have been set.
68. Within this very good teaching there is one area that should be tackled. The students have relatively few opportunities to undertake their own independent research or to undertake lengthy activities and investigations. The tried and tested methods adopted by the department work well for the vast majority of students, but their learning would be enhanced even more through varying the style of teaching at times and utilising the students' ICT skills in the same planned and consistent way that they are in Years 7 to 11.
69. The subject is very well led and managed and as a consequence good improvement has been secure since the last inspection, although no weaknesses were reported at that time. Staff understand their strengths and what has contributed to the department's success. There has been a good focus on maintaining the traditions and standards of the department through careful monitoring of the work of staff and an evaluation of examination data. The modelling of lessons for others to observe as a method of demonstrating good practice is a valuable tool to develop the experience and expertise of staff. The high quality of much of the teaching, the commitment of the students and the continued focus on what works well places the subject in a strong position to continue to be a success in the future.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- The students make very good progress and achieve standards that are well above national expectations.
- The students show very positive attitudes towards the subject.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- The dynamic leadership underpins a continual drive to improve.

Areas for improvement

- More opportunities need to be provided for students to take greater responsibility for their own learning.

70. The 2001 A Level results for chemistry were very high compared to the national average. Results over time have been consistently high, with students performing significantly better in chemistry than in their other subjects. In 2002, all 32 students gained a pass grade and 69 percent of them achieved the higher grades, A and B. This represents very good progress from the students' previous performance at GCSE.
71. Standards observed during the inspection reflect the A Level results, being well above national expectations. The very good teaching enables the students to achieve very well and make very

good progress. The teachers plan to ensure that the students cover the full range of the syllabus requirements. Their extensive subject knowledge underpins very clear expositions and lively sessions. In a Year 12 lesson on alcohols, for example, the teacher used 3-dimensional models, a demonstration and individual practical work to help the students to learn how and why alcohol behaves as it does. The well-paced lesson was presented in a lively and challenging way and enabled the students to make very good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the reactions of alcohols. In a Year 13 lesson where students were investigating rates of reaction, the teacher gave a very clear introduction to the practical work which enabled the students to engage with the task confidently and produce a graph from which they could establish the order of the reaction.

72. The teachers have high expectations and often probe the students' understanding through focused questioning. In a Year 12 lesson on enthalpy change, the teacher challenged the group to apply their knowledge of displacement reactions to explain why the reaction being studied slowed down, for example. The students respond very positively overall to their teachers and a good number are keen to answer questions, which they do using technical vocabulary with confidence. They work collaboratively during practical sessions and listen attentively to each other's points of view. The students' interest and good understanding is often reflected in the way that they also ask questions of the teacher. In some instances, opportunities are missed either to engage those students reluctant to respond to questions or to ask students to predict the outcomes of practical activities.
73. Practical skills are well taught overall and the students are able to record results, construct suitable graphs and analyse their findings. Written accounts are clear and the students' work reflects good mathematical skills. The students are aware of the need to consider degrees of accuracy. The staff use a good range of teaching and learning styles and have produced a CD rom containing a wealth of support materials, which is much appreciated by both Year 12 and Year 13 students. As a result of the very good teaching, students by Year 13 have acquired high levels of knowledge and understanding along with competent practical skills. Despite these very positive outcomes, and given the enthusiasm and positive attitudes of the students, greater demands should be placed on them to take more of an active lead in lessons.
74. The curriculum is broad and is enriched by clubs and visits. The progress of students is carefully tracked and good one-to-one support is provided both in and out of lessons. The students are made aware of their potential; targets for improvement are set and clearly recorded in their personal profiles. This process is understood and very largely appreciated by them. The students find the feedback on homework and progress tests helpful in consolidating their understanding.
75. Leadership and management are very good. There is clear educational direction and energy from the head of department, who is ably supported by a strong team of teachers. Data analysis is thorough and has resulted in additional support for the current Year 13, who did not achieve as well as they should have done in their AS examination. The development plan has appropriate priorities but would benefit from more sharply focused success criteria. The department runs efficiently on a day-to-day basis and is very well supported by the technician. Given the continued high standards and developments, such as the CD rom, to support learning, improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

Biology

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

Strengths

- The very good teaching is challenging the students and, linked to their high levels of motivation, is leading to very high levels of attainment.
- The mixed classes add a dimension of perception that the students appreciate.
- Good individual support is based on the strong relationships between students and teaching staff.
- The department is very well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Marking does not always provide clear guidance for the students to follow on how to raise standards.
- The students should be encouraged to use a wider range of study skills in their note-taking.

76. In the 2001 A Level examination, the results were well above the national average. Thirty-one students took the examination with just over half obtaining the higher grades of A and B. These results have been rising steadily in recent years and were broadly similar in 2002. In 2001 the students did significantly better in biology than in their other A Level subjects; this also shows the rising trend in that in 1998 they did significantly worse in biology than in their other subjects. The students make very good progress.
77. The standard of work seen during the inspection shows of Year 12 to be above average and Year 13 to be well above average. The quantity and depth of work completed by the students is very good. Year 13 students were seen applying their knowledge in practical situations: in investigating microscope slides of the pancreas to analyse the different component structures and exploring how the different hemispheres of the brain affect our perception of the world around us. Year 12 students were seen preparing for a teaching presentation on smoking-related diseases and beginning to understand the structure of the heart, again applying their theoretical knowledge in practical situations. They use a good range of ICT skills within their lessons. Weaker aspects of their work, seen in their folders, are evaluation skills and the construction of accurate graphs.
78. Teaching is very good overall and this is resulting in current students making very good progress. A strength is the good challenge that is given to the students through a range of teaching methods provided by different staff covering the different modules. Frequently work is linked to the examination requirements and strategies for learning are provided. The students are very well motivated and have very good relationships with the teachers, responding very well to the challenging teaching. The students appreciate extra information being provided if they have a particular interest in the subject and the support given if they need extra help. The additional dimension of having mixed-gender classes also provides a different perspective on the work studied and was felt by the boys to improve their levels of concentration. There is frequent use of question and answer to extend the students' understanding; however, the teacher often fills in the answers with more detail and so opportunities to develop the student deductive skills are missed. The marking of the student tests and essays highlights areas to be improved but does not always give clear guidance as to how that can be achieved. Students use a limited range of learning skills and miss opportunities to build up a revision resource for example, they rarely use highlighting and supplementary annotation of examination questions. Students have regular assessment tasks to monitor their progress, and the individual discussion involved in the school target-setting system provides clear ways in which they can improve their work.
79. The leadership of the department is very good. A variety of methods has been devised to assist the students on an individual and general level. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved and to improving standards. Since the last inspection the levels of attainment have risen, the relative performance of biology students has improved, there is greater range of enhancement opportunities and the number of students taking the subject is continuing to rise. This represents very good progress and the department has a very good base from which to improve further.

Physics

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

Strengths

- Students are achieving very well and reaching standards that are well above the national average.
- The students show very positive attitudes towards the subject.

- The overall quality of teaching is very good.
- Effective monitoring has resulted in focused support for those students at risk of underachieving.

Areas for improvement

- Students need to take on a more active role in leading discussions and debates.
- The use of ICT is not sufficiently extensive.

80. The GCE A Level results for physics, including those in 2001, have been well above the national average for the past four years. The students have consistently achieved better standards in physics than in their other subjects. In 2002, all but one of the 32 students gained a pass grade and 66 percent achieved either an A or B grade in the subject. This represents very good progress from their previous results in GCSE.
81. The very good teaching enables the students to achieve very well and reach standards by the end of Year 13 that are well above national expectations. The teachers are enthusiastic and their subject knowledge is very secure. This enables them to provide good explanations to students and to ask probing questions. In a Year 12 lesson for example, the teacher used a circus of experiments to introduce students to the properties of waves. The experiments provided a good set of challenges for the students, and the teacher moved around the groups, testing their understanding through focused questions. As a result, the students made good progress in their knowledge and understanding of the basic properties of waves and concepts such as resonance. The teachers' enthusiasm is especially evident through the teaching of the optional units of cosmology and telecommunications. In a particularly stimulating Year 13 session on cosmology, the teacher's own passion for the subject was clear as he steered the students through some very difficult concepts and generated an extremely high level of debate and discussion. The students themselves had read around the subject and were able to debate the ideas with confidence and very good background knowledge. This session provided a valuable opportunity for the students to contemplate some of the big questions of the universe. In the telecommunications module, the teacher had chosen to enliven the study by challenging the students to construct an operational amplifier circuit which would switch on a light in the dark. The students worked well together and were very keen to complete the circuit successfully. Purposeful discussion took place and the students gained a great deal from the experience. The teacher provided effective support when the students tried to correct those circuits that were not working.
82. The teachers plan their lessons carefully, ensuring that the students experience the full breadth of the syllabus. Practical skills are developed appropriately and there is an increasing use of experimental work to underpin theory, which was less evident in the students' work last year. As a result, the students perform practical work with competence and are able to record findings, display results graphically and interpret their observations. More use could be made of ICT in this respect. Mathematical skills are good, enabling the students to undertake calculations with confidence. The teachers generate enthusiasm among the students, who enjoy the subject and concentrate well on their studies. They are keen to respond to the teachers' prompts and often ask questions themselves in class. Students collaborate effectively in group practical work, sharing ideas freely.
83. Whilst teaching is very good overall, there are some missed opportunities. Students could be challenged further by being given time limits for their practical work in lessons. In sessions devoted to the development of individual skills, teachers should initially introduce the broader context of scientific enquiry to enable the students then to focus more easily on the specific skill in question. More generally, the students should be given increased opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning and lead discussions as they did during the study of the optional modules.
84. Leadership and management of the subject are good, with some very good features. The head of department joined the school in September and has already initiated some improvements such as the arrangements for overseeing the optional units. Data has been analysed and as a result, additional support has been provided for those Year 13 students at risk of underachieving. Year 13 students commented favourably on the developments that have been established recently.

Students generally consider that the target-setting process helps them to understand what they need to do to improve and they appreciate the individual support provided both in and out of lessons. The curriculum provides good coverage of the syllabus requirements and is extended through the astronomy club, for example, and visits. The development plan, whilst focusing on appropriate priorities, needs to have more targeted actions and clearer success criteria. The department is staffed by experienced and enthusiastic teachers, who are very well supported by the technician. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been good.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

85. No subject in this area was inspected in detail but work in design and technology was sampled. A Level results are well above average, as they have been in recent years. A good lesson was seen which was expertly led and provided sufficient challenge to require students to draw on a wide range of well-established skills and knowledge.

BUSINESS

86. Business studies was inspected in detail; work in economics was sampled. Standards in economics are very good. Examination results are well above average; the percentage of A or B grades is very high. Teaching is of a very high standard and students make very good progress in lessons. A stimulating lesson was seen on the role of interest rate changes as a tool of economic policy. Students were given a range of relevant, current resources and required to use them to evaluate the likely outcomes of changing interest rates by acting in the role of the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee. Student responses were excellent and they showed a clear understanding of the principle factors. Analysis of the thoroughly assessed student work showed that they were able to use appropriate economic terminology with proficiency. Leadership and management are very effective, providing a learning environment in which students are able to achieve their full potential.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- Standards in business studies at AS and A Level are high.
- Teaching and learning in both courses are very good.
- Leadership and management of the department are very effective.
- Extra-curricular opportunities involving business-related activities, some of which lead to success in national competitions, are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers should continue to increase the number of opportunities for students to lead discussion and debate in lessons.

87. Standards in business studies are very good. Examination results in 2001 were well above the national average. The percentage of students achieving an A or B grade was high and all candidates passed the examination. In the most recent examination in 2002, results improved. There was a significant increase in the percentage of higher grades and in the average point score per student. The standards reached by the current students, as seen in lessons and in written work, are very good overall. Portfolios in both Year 12 in the AS course and in Year 13 in the A Level course are very often impressive, containing coursework of a very high, sometimes excellent standard. The quality of work produced by students reflects their attitudes and values, which are also very good and frequently excellent. They have a very positive attitude towards the subject; they are very keen to contribute fully and take an active part in lessons when opportunities arise. Responses to questions in class are always very well considered. Answers are often detailed and delivered in a very fluent, articulate manner, using correct subject-specific terms. The students are able to discuss their coursework in great detail. They have a good understanding of context and

the relationship between different aspects of the course. They can justify particular coursework approaches and content in relation to the course as a whole.

88. The quality of teaching is consistently very good in both years. Detailed and well-constructed schemes of work provide a very good framework for lessons, which are well planned with a range of appropriate and challenging activities. Learning is very good. Teachers try to ensure that all students are fully involved throughout with targeted questions and tasks related to their different capabilities. Lessons frequently involve group activities, but even greater use could be made of the students' very good subject knowledge and their well-developed oral skills, in order for them to play a more prominent part in leading discussions and debate in lessons. Marking is regular and contains detailed diagnostic comments. Assessment is thorough and used to aid planning. The students are very well informed about their progress and have appropriate targets for further improvement.
89. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The department ensures that students take advantage of opportunities to engage in extra-curricular business-related activities and competitions in which they have success at national level. Moral and ethical issues are covered well in departmental schemes of work. The department's performance, including teaching, is monitored effectively. Appropriate action is taken in response to monitoring, ensuring that standards continue to improve.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Computing

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

Strengths

- Standards of computing at AS and A Level are high.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- There are many extra-curricular opportunities for students to practise and improve practical skills, particularly in supporting the school computer network.

Areas for improvement

- Written feedback, which is regular and informative, could be more detailed in some instances to support the excellent verbal diagnostic advice and evaluation given to students on their practical activities and their portfolio work.

90. A Level computing results in 2001 were above average; although there was a decline in the higher grades over the previous year, all candidates passed the examination and their average point score was much improved. Standards in 2002 were very good; results showed a very significant improvement in the higher grades and in the average point score for the subject.
91. The work seen in lessons, in portfolios and from conversations with students confirms that standards are very good and continuing to improve. Students make very good progress, and some exceptional coursework was seen in both Years 12 and 13 at AS and A Level. Much coursework is impressively produced using industry standard software to program applications for specific clients. The work is planned in great detail, thoroughly tested and refined as appropriate to meet the needs of the client well. User interfaces were very carefully designed for ease of use and to be aesthetically pleasing. In an excellent Year 13 theory lesson, students worked in groups using a paper-based activity, under a tight time constraint, to simulate the scheduling routine within the central processing unit of a computer. This challenging activity enabled students to demonstrate a very good ability to think logically, a high degree of understanding of the process and a very good grasp of terminology as group conclusions were discussed with the whole class.

92. Students show exceptional interest and enthusiasm for the subject. All lessons seen had a very positive working atmosphere and relationships, based upon mutual respect, are exemplary. The students are very keen to take part in teacher-led question and answer sessions and class discussions. They work very effectively in pairs and small groups, and many examples of effective peer support were seen during practical sessions. Some students have particularly good levels of skills and knowledge of computing which they were very pleased to share. Students are also encouraged to assist in the management and maintenance of the school computer network. This enables them to make a valuable contribution to the department as well as providing a realistic environment in which to develop their understanding of more advanced skills under the guidance of teachers and technical staff.
93. Teaching is very good overall and some was excellent. It is based upon detailed schemes of work and very well planned lessons that involve all students. Interesting and challenging activities are incorporated into lessons and extension work is available to provide further challenge for the most able. Questions in lessons are well targeted to enable all students to play an active part. Teachers ensure that coursework tasks provide students with appropriate challenges which enable them to achieve the grades of which they are capable. A very good level of support is provided during practical activities with a great deal of high quality oral diagnostic comment which enables students to review their work and make further progress. Written comments on some examples of work seen could have been more detailed but overall, student portfolios illustrate that assessment is mostly very good; it is both regular and thorough. The subject is very well led and managed. The school's ICT resources are used very effectively to ensure students feel confident that they are able to achieve their full potential in the subject.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

94. No subjects other than physical education were inspected or sampled in this area.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Results at A Level are consistently well above the national average.
- Teaching by knowledgeable, enthusiastic and committed staff is very good.
- Teacher-student relationships are excellent and as a result, students' attitudes to the subject are positive and they are motivated to do well.
- The school provides an excellent range of extra-curricular activities and very successful sports teams and individuals.
- The high quality and range of accommodation and resources have a significant effect on students' learning

Areas for improvement

- More student-centred lesson activities would encourage participation, promote independent learning and assist teachers in checking students' understanding of topics.

95. Attainment in 2001 for the Physical Education A Level was well above the national average with over a half of students achieving A or B grades compared with the national average of a quarter and, as is the case in most years, all students gaining at least a pass grade. Results for 2002 showed a similarly impressive performance. The attainment of current A Level students is at least as good, with two-thirds of Year 13 students achieving the top grades and the others gaining a C grade in their 2002 AS Level examinations. The high achievement of students is a result of very good teaching by knowledgeable, enthusiastic and committed teachers and purposeful but friendly teacher-student relationships which promote a pleasant and productive environment for students to learn in. Students answer authoritatively in theory classes, showing good understanding of terminology and the application of theory to sports situations. They participate with commitment

in practical sessions, displaying high levels of personal and team skills in sports developed through well-planned and stimulating activities.

96. Teaching in the subject is very good overall although the use of more student-centred lesson activities in theory lessons would encourage greater participation, promote independent learning and allow teachers additional opportunities to check students' understanding. The two good theory lessons observed provided evidence of this area for development; however, the brisk pace and the effective engagement of students in discussing the topics ensured they all contributed, stayed on task and made appropriate notes. In one lesson, students were able to analyse the effect of attitude and prejudice in sport and in the other they showed a very good understanding of the historical influences on the development of physical education in the UK. Students demonstrated excellent practical skills of passing, controlling and support play in attack and defence in rugby and football in a very good Year 12 lesson.
97. Students' attitudes to the subject are very positive, behaviour is always very good and they appreciate the time, commitment of, and access to, PE staff. As a consequence, students learn well in and out of lessons and gain the relevant knowledge and understanding of the examination topics. Individual students and school teams have achieved success in a range of sports at county, national and international level and there are many opportunities for students of all abilities to participate in clubs, teams and activities at lunch-time and after school. It is also pleasing to report that sixth form students have the opportunity to participate in a wide range of sports and activities as part of their timetabled curriculum where excellent use is made of both on and off-site facilities. Teachers assess written and practical work thoroughly and examination students are aware of their progress, attainment and target grades although some students feel that teachers need to be more specific in identifying precisely what they need to do to improve.
98. The department is very well led and managed. Staff are very effectively managed and deployed, department and student targets are set and teaching is monitored, although not yet in such a way as to provide formal feedback or to enable the sharing of good practice. The head of department and the experienced and newly qualified staff work well together as a team, setting high expectations of students and working hard to improve standards of attainment and participation further both for examination and non-examination candidates. However, this work now needs to be formalised into an appropriately constructed departmental plan which clearly details those targets which relate to standards and the key activities which need to be undertaken to achieve them. There has been good progress since the last inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

99. Work in media studies was sampled. Media studies is a popular and very successful A Level course which is now independent of the English department. In the previous inspection report, it was described as the "jewel in the crown" of that department, with some excellent teaching. In 2002, 21 candidates took the examination and 15 gained A or B grades, a very high pass rate. Increasing numbers of students are now choosing this course and doing very well in it. Facilities are excellent and the department, very well led by a dedicated enthusiast, offers exciting possibilities for students and the school as a whole.

Art

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

Strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good, which leads to very good achievement and high standards in examinations.
- Students have excellent attitudes towards their work, enabling a positive, industrious and pleasant atmosphere for learning to be maintained.

- A strong teaching team that is committed to improving standards in the department is very well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- Some recently acquired machinery is not sited in full compliance with safety requirements.
- The available storage space, shared with the design technology department, is inadequate.
- There is insufficient display space for three-dimensional work.

100. The proportion of students gaining the higher grades in A Level examinations in 2001 was well above the national average. Results in 2002 improved and the trend over the past three years has been upwards. There has been a very significant improvement since 2000. The exceptionally high standards in GCSE examinations are not carried through to A Level examinations, in part because many of the very high-attaining GCSE students do not go on to advanced level studies in art. The students do not do as well at AS Level as in other subjects but do better at A Level. The very good and sometimes excellent teaching seen during the inspection, indicates a department that will continue to improve standards in the coming years.
101. In work seen during the inspection, standards at the end of Year 13 are well above the national average. The students explore a wide range of media in very creative and original ways, in particular when working in three dimensions on wood, plaster, high-density foam and other workable media. The excellent knowledge and understanding of the teachers and the freedom of expression given to students enables imaginative work of a high technical standard to be undertaken by them. Group critical studies sessions are expertly managed and the students gain in both confidence and critical awareness as they evaluate the work being undertaken by the class. Personal studies and sketchbooks show a very wide range of research into the work of diverse artists and art movements, and students show the development of their ideas very clearly. They put a great deal of intellectual and creative effort into their work, using the expertise of the teachers to guide their learning along appropriate lines. This is seen clearly in the ICT presentations of work that they construct on the computers.
102. The quality of teaching is very good and sometimes excellent. Teachers have an excellent grasp of their subject areas and use their knowledge and skills very effectively to support learning, ensuring that students make very good progress with their work as it develops. They have appropriately high expectations of both work and behaviour and they manage the lessons expertly to maximise the learning opportunities for students. Students are regarded as mature and independent learners and they respond well with very positive and committed attitudes to their work. Critical studies sessions are particularly well managed, with students effectively challenged by teachers as they evaluate their work; from these they learn to use the language of art fluently. Students are self-disciplined and take full advantage of the time available to them outside formal lessons, when teachers extend their commitment to high standards. Teachers use computers effectively to enable students to construct very good quality presentations of their personal studies using industry standard software. They are more limited in their teaching of digital manipulation of art, although some students undertake this independently.
103. The head of department leads a strong team of teachers who share a very high level of commitment to the improvement of standards in the department. The subject has made a very good improvement since the last inspection, particularly in the areas of teaching and learning and the response of students in lessons. The very good leadership has led to a very well managed department that is carefully monitored to ensure that standards are maintained and improved over time, the department handbook being a very good example of effective management. There is insufficient technician time available to utilise fully the opportunities available in three-dimensional work, although support is given by the design technology department in specific areas of material preparation, such as the routing of tree sections. The department has very good links with the University of Plymouth, from which students benefit as they look to a career. Visits to galleries, local, provincial and overseas, extend the very good curriculum offered to students. Although good use is made of a computer suite, the computers available in the department are unsatisfactory, two of the three being unserviceable and the other lacking power for digital work. Staff are not fully trained to manage digital software for art. Accommodation is light and spacious, but lacks storage

space and display areas for three-dimensional work. Some recently acquired machinery used for cutting and forming materials is not sited to comply fully with safety requirements.

HUMANITIES

104. History and religious studies were the focus of the inspection. Work in psychology, government and politics and classical civilisation was sampled.
105. Psychology is taught in the adjoining Torquay Girls' Grammar School. A very good lesson was seen in which students learned much about social influences on behaviour. The lesson was very well structured and sequenced to enable students to build on and reinforce learning through the lesson. The students were effectively challenged by the practical tasks and gained in both knowledge and confidence in expressing their views.
106. A very good classical civilisation lesson was seen. Students have a very good understanding of the set texts – Virgil's *Aeneid* and Homer's *Odyssey*. Very good teaching enabled students to compare Virgil and Homer's concept of the epic hero. Six of the nine students are capable of A or B grades at A Level. This very good attainment is achieved with the help of stimulating academic teaching.
107. Government and politics students have a good knowledge and understanding of the historical development of conservatism as a set of political beliefs. Against this background, they showed good understanding of the difficulties for the modern party in determining its position on the political spectrum. Good teaching used a variety of newspaper articles and television news programmes to engage students in discussion about recent controversy in the party. The students' essays on ideologies – fascism, conservatism, anarchism etc – are very good.

History

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

Strengths

- The results in AS and A Level examinations from a large entry of students were very good.
- Academic teaching by well-qualified, experienced staff is of a high standard.
- Very supportive working relationships with teachers enable students to perform to the best of their ability.
- Very good departmental leadership and teamwork promote the development of high professional standards.

Areas for improvement

- Written critiques of students' essays often lack sufficient detail to guide improvement.

108. The A Level results in 2001 were well above average, with over two-thirds of the 23 candidates achieving grades A to C and none less than grade D. Students did as well in history as in the average of their other subjects. The students' performance was even higher in 2002 from a larger entry of 29 candidates, nearly two-thirds of them obtaining grade A or B. Similar results were recorded at AS Level by students now studying for A Level this year.
109. Standards of work seen in Year 13 are well above average and students' achievement is very good; they sustain high academic levels in their work. Most students keep well-organised files of notes and write intelligent essays, combining rational argument with good style and often impressing with references to the work of historians. In their planning for coursework, the students displayed very good knowledge and understanding of factors advancing and inhibiting the political power of the people in the hundred years to 1930. They handle historical sources extremely well. In an excellent lesson examining different historians' interpretations of the 1931 crisis for the Labour

government, students showed considerable ability in evaluating the evidence and determining the most convincing explanation of events. The intellectual challenge in the teaching of the subject is producing very good learning.

110. Standards in Year 12 are also well above average, as students have demonstrated in their coursework essays and analysis of historical sources on Mussolini's dictatorship. Students are highly motivated and have produced their best efforts over the coursework with great success. They are on target to achieve their predicted high grades. In lessons, the students showed their ability in historical analysis when discussing the reasons for Lenin's change of economic policy in 1921. The students make very good progress, helped by the mid-year review of their work, which has identified any problems and given them clear targets for improvement.
111. The quality of teaching at A Level is very good. The highly qualified teachers are skilled communicators of the subject, who balance lucid exposition of topics with effective use of discussion to increase students' understanding and challenge their thinking. On the odd occasion, protracted use of whole group questioning lessens its effectiveness. Students express their appreciation of the support that they receive from their teachers, who treat them as young adults. The teachers pitch lessons at the right academic level for their able students, introducing them to a range of scholarship and a wide variety of historical sources, including archive video material. The students are encouraged to make use of ICT but its potential as a teaching tool has yet to be exploited. Teachers provide expert instruction to equip students with the historical skills that they need. For example, in one lesson the students learned much about essay technique by acting as examiners marking a specimen essay. Skills of independent enquiry are promoted well through occasional opportunities to research and present findings, as in recent Year 12 presentations on leaders of the women's suffrage movement, and in the assessed individual assignments in Year 13. Marking of essays is accurate but often does not give enough diagnostic feedback to target improvement. There are a few students whose files need checking more often.
112. Leadership of the subject is very good, providing professional support to teachers and creating the right climate on the team for continued improvements in teaching and learning, and the maintenance of high standards. Management is good. The department is efficiently run but development planning for the sixth form is not specified in sufficient detail to make clear the strategies for achieving future goals for the subject. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. Teaching has improved and so have standards. This is in many respects a model department, providing students with ideal preparation for undergraduate studies in history.

Religious education

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

Strengths

- The levels of attainment are consistently well above the national average.
- Discussion is of high quality amongst students.
- Teaching enables the students to achieve very well, challenging them to think through issues.
- The motivation of the students and the excellent relationships between the teachers and students lead to very good progress taking place.

Areas for improvement

- Staff need to employ a wider variety of teaching styles.

113. In 2001 the A Level examination results were well above the national average. Eight students took the examination with six obtaining the higher grades of A and B. This level of attainment has been maintained in recent years and was broadly similar in 2002, with a higher number of entries. In 2001 the students' results were the same as the average of the results in their other subjects. The students make very good progress in this subject.

114. The standard of work of the current students is well above average. They discuss at a high level in both the philosophical and ethical aspects of the course. They have a good understanding of the complexity of ethical issues and are able to give their own understanding of a variety of topics, as seen when a Year 12 class were discussing euthanasia. They showed empathy and a sensitive approach to the various aspects of the problem relating to the issue on a personal level. Another group of Year 12 students showed a perceptive understanding of Plato and the analogy of the cave from *The Republic*. Year 13 students were seen coming to grips with the philosophical aspects of the use of language and an understanding of the views of Richard Dawkins. They show the ability to extract information from texts and summarise the key points to use in discussion and they use technical terms correctly. They show a very good depth of knowledge and are able to quote the ideas of different philosophers in appropriate places. A presentation to parents by Year 12 of a variety of ethical and philosophical issues showed their ability to use ICT in an effective manner.
115. Teaching is very good. This is resulting in current students making good progress. The very good subject knowledge of the teachers is evident in directing the discussion and in their answers to students' questions. The students respond very well to the challenging teaching. They show interest in the subject, work hard and help one another. The students greatly appreciate the discussion style in that it makes them think rather than just assimilating facts in a taught situation. The students are expected to follow up the discussion with reading around the topic and so develop their independent learning skills. The students' folders show that they use a wide range of study skills in recording their work including highlighting and annotating. Students complete essays at the end of each topic. The marking of these is thorough and detailed so the students are aware of what is needed to raise the work to the next level. However, some students are hesitant in participating in discussions; although the teacher often asks for their views, assessment of their understanding from lesson to lesson is difficult. There are also times when the discussion is dominated by the teacher and this also inhibits the development of students' views. Use of the school system of regular assessment and target setting supplemented by individual discussion clearly enables the students to understand their own current level of attainment and what is needed to raise that level.
116. The curriculum provided for the students is good. The choice of papers for the A Level was made to take into account other wider interests. The course is supplemented by a range of enhancement opportunities involving attendance at conferences, outside speakers and the use of past students.
117. The leadership of the department is very good. Standards have risen since the time of the last inspection and the number of students opting for the subject is rising. This represents very good progress. There is a commitment to building on what has already been achieved to improve the quality of the course offered and strive for excellence. The department has a very good base from which to fulfil these goals.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

118. English literature, French and German were inspected in detail.

English literature

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

Strengths

- Standards of attainment at A Level are high.
- The teachers have good subject knowledge and research skills.
- An excellent foundation is provided by the standards of teaching, learning and attainment at GCSE.

- The leadership, management and teamwork in the department are very good.

Areas for improvement

- More scope for students to lead and initiate in lessons is needed.
- A wider range of extra-curricular activities would enhance learning.

119. English is now the most popular A Level subject choice. 43 candidates took the examination in 2002, a significant increase over the previous year. Currently, 65 students in Year 12 are studying English literature. This upward trend is a tribute to the success of the English department in raising the status and appeal of a subject in which, nationally, boys have done less well than girls. It also reflects the good work being done in the main school and particularly the record of outstanding achievement in GCSE.
120. The percentage of students attaining A or B in A Level Literature in 2001 was well above the national average. In 2002, where no national comparisons are available, this proportion was lower, but in both years results in English compared well with those in other subjects.
121. Lessons and written work seen during the inspection indicate that these very good standards are being maintained. Students take their work seriously and work with quiet concentration in lessons. Their folders show that from the start of the course they are developing a thorough understanding of the texts, good critical vocabulary and judicious use of quotation and reference to support well-argued essays. Excellent examples were seen from students across the ability range. In lessons, however, these qualities are not always as well demonstrated. Although students work effectively in pairs or small groups, they are less forthcoming in whole class or plenary sessions. They respond well to questions or prompting from teachers but seldom take a lead, initiate, challenge or question. Teachers sometimes have to work very hard to stimulate discussion. In a lesson on the play *Our Country's Good* this was done very successfully and students not only benefited from but clearly enjoyed some lively argument. Some short presentations of extracts from *The Tempest* in another class gave students the opportunity to use both analytical and acting skills and they did this well. In some lessons rather too much time was spent on note-taking or preparation. Sometimes this would have been better done as homework, so that students could come to class ready to share their findings and opinions, with the teacher's guidance and input available to the whole group.
122. The quality of teaching is good overall, and some very good and outstanding lessons were seen, in the sixth form as in the main school. Teaching has many strengths. These include excellent subject knowledge, which teachers develop by their own careful study and research. As a result, the background and contextual materials they prepare for students are of high quality and they do not rely on commercial support materials.
123. Class relationships are good; the teachers know their students well and are careful to monitor each student's progress, targets and needs. Marking and assessment are exemplary. Teachers read the written work very thoroughly. They show their pleasure and appreciation in students' good writing but are astute and analytical in their judgements. Students are given a clear indication of the strengths and weaknesses in their work and how they can improve it. With marking of this quality, a valuable dialogue is established between student and teacher.
124. Both staff and students make good use of ICT, and in lessons overhead projectors are effective for rapid sharing or comparison of texts and commentaries. A good library is available as a resource and study space for students. The English staff have made splendid use of the display boards available in the department to show both students' work and other materials, such as theatre posters and copies of Poems on the Underground. A feature of the displays is the attention given to presentation and finish: work is word processed and mounted, posters framed and poems laminated.
125. Outside resources, including visits to theatres and performances by visiting theatre groups are used for the sixth form and the main school when appropriate.

126. Although there is an extension class for a small group of A Level students and also a creative writing club, extra-curricular opportunities for English sixth form students are somewhat limited at present. Some consideration might be given to encouraging discussion, debate and pleasure in argument by some regular activities, not necessarily formal debate. As the school has no drama department, most drama opportunities, apart from the annual musical production, are very much the responsibility of the busy English department. Some initiatives have come from individual sixth formers. There is scope for encouraging more small-scale performances by A Level students, of extracts from their own plays and other texts, including Shakespeare.
127. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good in some areas, less marked in others, but the very high standards of attainment have been maintained, as has the quality of teaching. Systems for monitoring and evaluation have improved, and so has professional development planning. Media studies, a highly praised part of the English department in 1997, is now separate and attracting increasing numbers of students.
128. The leadership and management of English are very good; commitment and effective teamwork are evident throughout the department. There is an excellent departmental handbook, with clearly defined policies which indicate ways in which the subject, at all levels, can contribute to students' personal development, to their spiritual, moral and cultural experience and to racial and social harmony. The English department, in the sixth form as in the main school, is making a valuable contribution to the success and progress of the school.

French

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good with well-planned lessons, conducted exclusively in French.
- A broad curriculum includes stimulating and relevant cultural content and a variety of extra-curricular activities.
- Assessment procedures are very good, enabling pupils to develop their awareness of the standards that they have achieved and what they need to do to improve.

Areas for improvement

- The department should continue to develop opportunities for using new technology to enhance language learning.
- The department should introduce strategies for maintaining and increasing recruitment to the French A Level course.

129. Standards achieved by students entered for A Level French are well above average. In 2001 they achieved similar results in this subject as they did in the average for all their other subjects. The average point score obtained by the candidates in French in 2001 was well above the national average and shows an improving trend since 1998 when it was slightly below. The percentage of candidates who gained A or B rose for the third successive year in 2002 when thirteen candidates were entered. The numbers entered for French A Level in recent years have fluctuated, but the average for the five years ending in 2002 is just over ten.

130. The quality of teaching observed in sixth form lessons is very good overall and sometimes excellent. Teachers are well prepared, have outstanding knowledge of their subject and respond well to the needs of their students. Students practise the full range of skills and study important topics relevant to their interests. A range of different learning activities is employed, giving them the chance to develop their own learning styles. Students work conscientiously and show respect for their teachers who respond with warmth and encouragement, both in lessons and when marking their work. Teachers challenge students with stimulating activities, often involving group and pair work, and students join in with enthusiasm. In both Years 12 and 13, students are given the opportunity to speak about topics they have prepared to the whole class. This works well in both years and was particularly successful in Year 13 where controversial questions were discussed and students were obliged to extemporise in conversation with each other. They worked hard to express themselves in areas where some of the vocabulary was new or unfamiliar and the experience enabled them to make particularly good progress. The very sound framework of grammatical knowledge, acquired in previous years, is an essential factor in promoting their very good progress. In Year 12, students still require considerable support when involved in conversation and writing, but in Year 13, they speak with confidence in French, have no difficulty understanding what is said to them and produce accurate, well-written essays. They receive plenty of practice in examination technique in both years.

131. The curriculum is broad, balanced and appropriate to the needs of the students. Students benefit from the very well planned course and are enabled to make links between elements taught by each of the teachers. They feel stimulated and are keen to extend their knowledge by reading French newspapers and exploring opportunities for communicating by means of the internet. They develop personally as well as culturally and academically from the experience of learning French at A Level, deriving great benefit from a resource library dedicated to A Level students and from conversation sessions with the French assistant. Their ability to read for pleasure and for information is advanced by the availability of interesting and relevant material in the form of books, magazines, audio and video cassettes. Students report that they become more independent, especially as they move from Year 12 to Year 13, and feel well supported by their teachers in making the leap from GCSE to A Level study.

132. The leadership and management of the A Level course in French are very good. The head of French manages teaching and assessment while the head of modern languages is responsible for the school's vision for language teaching and overall leadership of the department's activities. This arrangement is working very well. A clear view is being developed within the department of what constitutes good practice, and teaching is monitored systematically in order to secure improvement. Teamwork within the department is very good and the departmental handbook is very well written and organised, including policies and procedures covering all important areas. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection.

German

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

Strengths

- Teachers speak exclusively in German in well-planned lessons.
- A broad curriculum contains relevant and stimulating cultural content, builds on previous success and offers a very rich variety of extra-curricular activities.
- Very good assessment procedures enable students to understand their own attainment and become aware of what they need to do to improve.

Areas for improvement

- Students should be encouraged to make more use of the opportunity to practise speaking German in lessons with each other.
- Opportunities to develop the use of new technologies to enhance language learning should be encouraged.
- Strategies for maintaining and increasing recruitment to the German A Level course need to be introduced.

133. Standards currently in the sixth form German A Level courses are above average. The students entered for A Level German in 2001 achieved average results. They did not do as well as they did in other subjects, but this was an exception. In the three previous years German results had been better, and sometimes much better, than in the average for students' other subjects. The average point score obtained by the candidates had also been well above the national average for German, though it was only just above the national average in 2001. The percentage gaining grades A or B within the school rose very sharply in 2002. The numbers entered for German A Level in recent years have fluctuated, but have risen recently and reached double figures in both 2001 and 2002.

134. The quality of teaching observed in sixth form lessons is good overall and sometimes very good. Teachers have excellent knowledge of their subject, prepare meticulously and respond effectively to the needs of their students. Students respond by working hard and benefit from the information they receive about the examination requirements. Their confidence, based on good progress made throughout the course, grows as they approach the A Level examination. They cover the full range of skills in lessons and study topics which are interesting and relevant, including German cinema, health-related issues such as the dangers of drug addiction and environmentally-related issues such as pollution in the North Sea. Teachers provide clear guidance when marking students' work and this promotes good progress. Written work becomes noticeably more accurate as students make progress and become more proficient in their ability to handle German grammar. Essays are written to a high standard and note-taking skills improve; in one Year 13 lesson on the cinema, students were easily able to support each other in making plans in German for the filming of scenes based on an original script. Students appreciate the frequent opportunities to communicate in German with their teacher and the foreign language assistant, but it is rare for them to speak the language to each other. Students usually prefer to address their peers in English and teachers do not challenge this tendency enough.

135. The curriculum is broad and balanced and appropriate to students' needs. They enjoy using the dedicated departmental resource library and read widely, for pleasure as well as for information. Books, magazines, audio and video cassettes are available and students are encouraged to learn

independently, by using the internet and other ICT facilities. Students develop personally as well as culturally and academically from learning German and are convinced of the value of learning languages at A Level. They believe that a greater emphasis on more advanced skills would be useful at an earlier stage, including before they finish their GCSE courses.

136. The leadership and management that the school provides for A Level German are very good. Teaching and assessment of the language are managed by the head of German and the overall leadership of the department's activities, together with a vision for the development of language teaching is the responsibility of the head of modern languages. This arrangement is very effective. The department is developing a clear view of good practice and there is regular monitoring of teaching, which has proved successful both in sustaining and improving on high standards. There is very good teamwork, supported by a very well written and organised departmental handbook, which is both practical, containing policies and procedures, and aspirational, with appropriate aims and objectives for the future. This leadership has helped to ensure that improvement since the last inspection has been good.