

INSPECTION REPORT

ROSEBERY SCHOOL

Epsom

LEA area: Surrey

Unique reference number: 125307

Headteacher: Ms H Saunders

Reporting inspector: Robin Coulthard
11746

Dates of inspection: 20th – 24th January, 2003

Inspection number: 249632

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 – 18
Gender of pupils:	Female
School address:	White Horse Drive Epsom
Postcode:	KT18 7NQ
Telephone number:	01372 720439
Fax number:	01372 749219
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr David Hagger
Date of previous inspection:	03.03.97

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
11746	Robin Coulthard	Registered inspector		How good are students' results and achievements? How well are the students taught?
25073	Stuart Jordan	Team inspector Sixth form co-ordinator	Sociology	How well is the school led and managed?
9537	Caroline Marden	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its students?
18178	Ian Matthews	Team inspector	Mathematics	
3242	Michael Newman	Team inspector	Biology Psychology	
2501	Raye Allison-Smith	Team inspector	Art and design	
22491	Lorraine Small	Team inspector	Design and technology	
32231	Adrian Lyons	Team inspector	Economics and business	
10761	Patrick Willan	Team inspector	History	
15208	Anthony Briggs	Team inspector	Music	
3726	Maureen Bean	Team inspector	Sports studies Health and social care	
28199	Peter Lawley	Team inspector	English	How good are curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
15075	Bryan Stephens	Team inspector	French English as an additional language Educational inclusion	

The inspection contractor was:

e-Qualitas Ltd, Langshaw, Pastens Road, Limpsfield Chart, Oxted, RH8 0RE.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Rosebery School, which is situated close to the northern boundary of Surrey, is the only foundation comprehensive school for girls aged 11 – 18 in the county. It is above the average size, with 1314 pupils, of whom 240 are in the sixth form. The school is popular and oversubscribed each year. After GCSE, the school loses some of its ablest pupils to the selective and independent sectors. Most of the pupils are of White British origin, and 192 are from known other racial backgrounds. The proportion of pupils who have English as an additional language (6.6 per cent), is higher than in most schools, but a very small number are at an early stage of learning English. The commonest languages other than English are Bangladeshi, Gujarati and French. Pupils' socio-economic backgrounds are above average, and the number of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well below average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs is 13.2 per cent, which is also below average. Pupils' principal needs are associated with moderate learning difficulties and dyslexia. Only 0.4 of pupils have statements of special educational need, which is well below average. Pupils' attainment on entry to Year 7 is above average. The school is successful in minimising the adverse effects of the problem encountered by schools in the region of recruiting and retaining staff.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school with some excellent features. Standards are well above average at the end of Years 9 and 11. Under the outstanding leadership of the headteacher, the management of the school is excellent. Senior managers and governors have a clear vision for the school's continuing development and school policies are purposefully implemented on a day-to-day basis at every level. Teaching is very good in the main school and the sixth form, and pupils reach standards that are well above those achieved nationally by pupils with similar starting points. Pupils bring very good attitudes to their learning, and relationships within the school are excellent. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils' very good attainment results from high standards of teaching and learning.
- The wide-ranging curriculum is supplemented by outstanding opportunities for extracurricular enrichment.
- Excellent leadership and management ensure that the school is run very efficiently and reflects its vision in its practice.

What could be improved

- There are no significant areas of weakness.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March, 1997. The improvement since then has been very good. Standards have improved at a rate above the national trend. The many strengths reported in the school have been maintained. Teaching has improved, and teachers now use a wider range of teaching methods to enable pupils to learn more actively. Data from the monitoring of pupils' progress is now used more constructively to set pupils challenging targets for improvement. Curriculum planning fully reflects National Curriculum requirements and all subjects provide clear learning objectives linked to

opportunities for assessing pupils' work. The school's assessment policy is thoroughly and constructively implemented.

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	B	B	n/a	

Key

well above average A

above average B

average C

below average D

well below average E

The school's results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were well above average in comparison with all schools nationally in English, mathematics and science. The trend of improvement in all three subjects has been above the national trend in recent years. In comparison with schools whose pupils had gained similar results at the end of Year 6, results were in the top five per cent nationally in English and science, and well above average in mathematics. At GCSE, results in 2002 were well above average, compared with all schools and compared with similar schools, that is schools with a similar proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. In comparison with schools where attainment was similar at the end of Year 9, the school was above average. The school slightly exceeded its challenging target for the percentage of pupils gaining five or more GCSE passes at grades A* to C, and met the target for the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to G grades. The school's average point score, 52.7, was slightly below the target of 54. Overall at GCSE, girls did best in English language, design and technology, business studies, French and geography and comparatively less well in science, drama, English literature, German, history and physical education.

Overall, standards are well above average at the end of Year 9 and remain so at the end of Year 11. This indicates that pupils' achievement is very good in relation to their attainment on entry. The school encourages very good standards of literacy. Pupils show a very good grasp of technical language in each subject, and their written work is thorough, detailed and well presented. Standards of attainment in the sixth form are above average overall and students achieve very well.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning. They enjoy coming to school, work hard and want to achieve well. Pupils are enthusiastic in lessons and are conscientious about doing their homework.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary both within lessons and around school. This contributes to the positive working ethos of the school.
Personal development and relationships	Excellent. Pupils are very active within the school community. They take full advantage of the wide range of extracurricular activities and undertake responsibilities such as form captains and school councillors. Relationships are excellent amongst pupils and with staff.

Attendance	Very good , although the school reports an increasing tendency for parents to take holidays in term time.
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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 very good in both the main school and the sixth form. It was good or better in eight out of ten lessons in Years 7 to 11, and nine out of every ten in the sixth form. Three fifths of the lessons observed were very good or better, with one in ten excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed, and teaching was at least good in all subjects. Relations between teachers and pupils are excellent. Teachers are enthusiastic and energetic, and their management of pupils is excellent. In response to the teachers' high expectations, pupils are strongly motivated and they work very hard. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach are excellent. Lessons are very carefully planned, with suitable objectives which are made clear to pupils. Pupils concentrate very well and sustain their effort very well through lessons, because lessons have a good mix of teacher-led and independent activities and the content is interesting. Time is carefully allocated to tasks to ensure a very good pace of learning. Teachers monitor pupils' individual progress very well, giving a high level of individual support. By this means, pupils over the whole range of ability are suitably challenged. Gifted and talented pupils, those with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs all learn very effectively. Lessons finish with consolidation of what has been learnt, usually with carefully targeted questioning by the teacher. Homework is very carefully set and is an important factor in pupils' development of their skills in learning independently.

The teaching of English, mathematics and science is very good. Literacy is very well developed in English lessons and well taught across the curriculum. Numeracy is well developed in mathematics and through a range of other subjects. Good opportunities occur for pupils to develop their skills in information and communication technology (ICT).

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum meets statutory requirements well and provides a very good range of learning experiences. These are supplemented by outstanding opportunities for extracurricular development, particularly in music.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. Pupils' special needs are identified early and provided for in a good variety of ways. These include carefully targeted in-class support and some withdrawal groups. The development of literacy skills is a priority. The progress of pupils with special needs is systematically monitored.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. The progress of pupils with English as an additional language is carefully monitored as they move up the school. Great care is taken to check that they develop appropriate study skills and a thorough knowledge of technical language in the subjects they study.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and	Very good. Overall, provision for students' personal development is very good. Provision for moral and social development is excellent. Very good opportunities occur for pupils to learn about western culture. Although multicultural education is satisfactory, opportunities are missed

cultural development	in some subjects to help prepare students for life in multicultural Britain. Provision for spiritual development is good.
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Aspect	Comment
How well the school cares for its pupils	Excellently. The systems for support and guidance work very successfully, and students respond very well to the excellent support provided by staff. Form tutors look after pupils very well on a day-to-day basis. The system is very well co-ordinated by heads of year. Very good assessment procedures provide pupils with constructive advice on how they may improve their work.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. The management provided by the senior team is excellent. They provide very good examples of good practice through the high standards of their own teaching. All planning and priorities are purposefully directed towards improving achievement and provision for pupils' welfare. Excellent policies and procedures result in workable routines and very effective development planning. Other staff with posts of responsibility contribute much to the efficient running of the school.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Excellently. Governors are a highly effective team who strongly and actively support the school. They have a very thorough knowledge of its strengths and areas for development. They closely monitor its work and achievements, and have useful links with subject departments. They set challenging targets for the headteacher and senior staff. The governors' collective professional expertise enables them to play a very significant part in planning future developments and priorities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Excellent. Monitoring of teaching is very effectively used as a means of raising standards, and particularly in offsetting the problems caused by the difficulties of teacher recruitment. Clearly defined responsibilities, rigorously-applied accountability and continuous monitoring of standards enable the school to keep a close watch on its effectiveness.
The strategic use of resources	Excellent. The school has excellent plans for its future development, including further adaptation of the site. The budget is very carefully managed. All spending is carefully linked to long-term priorities. Day-to-day monitoring of expenditure is strictly controlled. All grants are spent for their intended purpose. The school consults widely, including with students and parents, and compares what it offers with what is available in other schools locally to ensure the quality and suitability of what it provides. Excellent financial management means that the school seeks the best value for what it spends.
Staffing, accommodation and resources	Staffing is good . The school has an excellent system of induction and staff development is very effective. Accommodation is satisfactory , but some science rooms are too small for the groups who occupy them, which limits some activities, and accommodation for art is cramped. The lack of covered walkways between buildings creates unpleasant conditions in bad weather, and the site has poor drainage. Resources

	are good , overall. The school's learning resource centre contains a very good range of materials to support most subjects and good ICT facilities to aid research.
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PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The girls are happy at school. • Teaching is good and pupils make good progress. • Teachers expect pupils to work hard. • Pupils become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about pupils' progress. • How closely the school works with them.

The inspection team fully agrees with the parents' positive views. The information provided about pupils' progress is good. Reports give a clear picture of the level of attainment in relation to National Curriculum levels or to GCSE points scores. The school has satisfactory procedures for working with parents.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is larger than most with 241 students on roll; 134 in Year 12 and 107 in Year 13. Almost all Year 11 pupils continue into further education. The great majority of students stay at Rosebery. However, some abler pupils are attracted to independent or selective schools in the area; in 2002 twenty-two students followed this route. The school places a strong emphasis on equality of opportunity and operates an open sixth form, providing comprehensive advice and guidance to ensure that, wherever possible, student attainment and aspirations are matched to suitable courses. A wide range of A-level courses is offered and a further increase in the number and range of vocational opportunities is planned for September 2003. A small number of students re-take GCSE examinations. To follow an A-level course, students need to have gained a minimum GCSE standard of 6 A* to C grades. Three-quarters of the girls in Year 12 are following AS courses with almost all the remainder choosing combinations of AS and vocational courses. Similarly, most students in Year 13 follow A-level courses or combinations of A-level and vocational courses. Fewer students leave at the end of Year 12 than is usual, over 80 per cent completing two years in the sixth form. Students can take part in a very wide range of other activities, including sport, dramatic and musical productions, community service and work experience. Students' attainment on entry to the sixth form is above average.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is very effective. It meets the needs of its students very well through a very good range of learning opportunities and very good teaching. As a result, students learn and achieve very well. Students' attainment and results are above average. Leadership of the sixth form is excellent. Procedures for monitoring students' academic progress are excellent. The teachers take a close personal interest in their students' achievement and welfare, and provide them with very good advice on their further development. Very good provision is made for the few students with English as an additional language, or who have special educational needs. The school has high expectations of its students. Their progress is monitored rigorously and counselling and guidance are provided as necessary. Very good opportunities exist for social development. Students are encouraged to take responsibility as prefects, or help organise extracurricular activities. They provide leadership for younger pupils in supporting worthwhile causes, and help them in their learning. Students' attitudes are excellent; they are responsible and wholehearted in their approach to learning. They provide excellent role models for younger pupils. In their posts of responsibility as prefects and their very willing participation in extracurricular activities, they make a significant additional contribution to the lively ethos and overall effectiveness of the school. The sixth form provides good value for money. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

Strengths

- Very good teaching leading to very good learning and standards that are above average.
- A very good range of learning opportunities and an excellent range of opportunities for extracurricular development.
- Students' excellent attitudes to learning and excellent relationships with teachers and other students.
- Excellent leadership and management by the headteacher and senior team.

What could be improved

- There are no significant areas for improvement. Strengths and areas for improvement in

individual subjects, however, 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	Good. Examination results are consistently above average and rose in 2002. Students are highly motivated and achieve well. Teaching and learning are good overall.
Biology	Good. Standards meet national expectations and achievement is good. Teaching and learning overall are good. Management is sound, despite some concerns about students' pace of work.
Product design	Very good. Results are well above average and students learn very well. Teaching is very good and leads to very good individual achievement.
Economics and business	Very good. Standards in the A-level course are very high. Very good teaching means that students achieve and learn very well.
History	Good. A very popular subject, with very good teacher-student relationships. Teaching is good overall. Students achieve and learn well.
Sports studies	Very good. Students are very keen and they achieve very well. Teachers' excellent knowledge and understanding, combined with very good planning, are key factors in securing very good learning.
Health and social care	Very good. Students are very interested in the subject, very well motivated, and they achieve very well. The teaching is enthusiastic and knowledgeable, and overall it is very good, particularly in connection with the coursework assignments.
Art and design	Very good. Teachers' excellent knowledge, expertise and high expectations lead to very good learning, and promote excellent attitudes amongst students. Standards and results are well above average, and rising further.
Music	Very good. Results were above average in 2001. Students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching. Excellent leadership and management are ensuring that students make very good progress.
Sociology	Very good. Results have risen to well above the national average since the last report. Very good teaching and very positive student attitudes lead to very good learning and high achievement.
Psychology	Good. Standards meet or exceed national expectations and achievement is good at AS-level and in the early part of the new A-level course. Teaching and learning are good. Management is good and standards have been maintained despite staffing difficulties.
English	Very good. The very good teaching holds students' interest and promotes high levels of independent thinking and excellent student attitudes. Attainment fell last year, but has now risen again, and students are achieving very well.

French	Good. Teachers' linguistic skills are very good and teaching is good. Students have a wide range of previous attainment and overall their achievement is good. Relationships are very good.
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In addition, lessons were sampled in physics, chemistry, ICT, photography, media studies, drama, geography, law, religious studies, English Language and German. The teaching and learning taking place in these and the standards demonstrated were very similar to those reported in the inspected subjects.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The school has developed a range of excellent procedures for the collection, analysis and dissemination of information on students' progress. The strong systems for support and guidance are an important feature of the school. Very good guidance about careers is provided for students. They respond very well to the excellent support they receive from staff.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The director and deputy director of the sixth form work closely with their team of tutors and the leadership group to provide excellent management and leadership, both on a day-to-day basis and in planning for the future. Governors take a keen and active interest in the wellbeing of the sixth form students and its continuing development. The monitoring of teaching and learning, and of students' academic and personal development are excellent.

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"> The help they received to settle in The good range of courses that is available The good teaching they receive and the availability of the teachers to give extra help They are treated like adults They are happy in the sixth form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for university applications and careers advice The assessment of their work Academic tutor reviews

The inspectors support the students' positive views. Inspectors found that the school has good procedures for supporting students as they prepare for life after they leave the sixth form. In addition, students agree that they receive a very good level of informal support if they ask for it. Students report that they do not perceive the formal academic tutor interviews as useful but they value the excellent support they get from their subject teachers.

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

Pupils' very good attainment results from high standards of teaching and learning

1. Girls are keen to come to Rosebery, and the school is heavily oversubscribed each year. Overall standards are above average at the start of Year 7, and the school builds very effectively on these. At the end of Year 9, standards in the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science have remained well above the national average since the previous inspection. In 2002, results were in the top five per cent for schools whose pupils had similar attainment on entry, and in comparison with schools with a similar free school meal context. The results of teacher assessments in other subjects indicate that in almost all subjects pupils are achieving very highly. At least 96 per cent achieved the expected National Curriculum Level 5 in geography, history, design and technology, physical education, art and music. In art and music, some gifted and talented pupils gained Level 8. In modern foreign languages, results were well above both the girls' and all pupils' national averages. A lack of suitably qualified staff meant that results in ICT were below average.

2. GCSE results are well above average. Eighty-one per cent gained five or more passes at grades A* to C. Ninety-nine per cent gained five or more passes at A* to G. Results have risen faster than results nationally over the past five years. Results are above average in all subjects, and significantly above in almost all. When attainment is compared with that of pupils who had similar results at the end of Year 9, the school is well above average. Pupils achieve very well throughout the school in relation to their starting points, and the school has added value to their attainment.

3. The picture is similar in the sixth form, where, despite the loss to other providers of post-16 education of some of the ablest girls, Rosebery students achieve above average points scores in their examinations compared both with other maintained sixth forms and all post-16 providers.

4. Teaching throughout the school is very good. In the main school, about one lesson in eight was excellent. A very high proportion of lessons inspected were very well taught. Over eight in ten lessons were at least good, and no teaching was judged unsatisfactory. The teaching has some excellent features. In particular, the quality of the relationships that exist between teachers and pupils, and amongst pupils, is conspicuously high. Teachers are very enthusiastic and dedicated and always prepared to go the extra mile to help pupils. The shared enthusiasm between teachers and pupils is a major element in the school's excellent ethos. As a result, teachers' management of pupils is excellent. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, and they plan lessons very carefully. This planning takes due account of the range of ability within each group. Lesson objectives are made clear at the start of each lesson and at the end teachers confirm that they have been successfully met. The use of time is excellent. The best planning includes challenging deadlines to ensure the best possible pace of work. Lessons are intrinsically interesting, and a good variety of teaching methods and resources helps further to retain pupils' attention and concentration. Where teaching was very successful, teachers established a topic and a pace of working and made a significant input. Then they allowed pupils to work independently, either individually or in groups, supporting individuals as needed.

5. Homework is used very constructively to develop pupils' skills in learning independently. It is set at an early point in the lesson as an integral part of the learning. Very often it provides good opportunities for pupils to carry out research using ICT.

6. Lessons provide pupils with very good opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills and literacy. Teachers are skilled questioners. Where teaching was excellent, the teacher required oral

responses not just from volunteers, but targeted some of the more reticent pupils. In an outstanding Year 9 lesson on 'Macbeth', the teacher ensured that all pupils worked as hard as they could throughout the lesson, by directing questions of appropriate difficulty at different girls, giving them time to think, helping them frame their answers if necessary, then praising and reassuring them. Sometimes she asked further questions to challenge them further. The result was excellent achievement by the girls, who substantially deepened their understanding of the character and motives of Lady Macbeth, producing written work of a very high standard. The previous lesson had enthused some pupils so much that in anticipation they had produced perceptive pen-portraits of Lady Macbeth. One pupil's original and very pithy writing said, 'Lady Macbeth is a very deep, dark character, strong willed, and she fears nothing. She wraps Macbeth round her little finger. She could get away with murder... literally!'

The wide-ranging curriculum is supplemented by outstanding opportunities for extracurricular enrichment

7. The school's curriculum provides well for the whole range of pupils. All statutory subjects are taught in Years 7 to 9, with the addition of drama. In addition to French, pupils take German in Years 8 and 9. Pupils with special educational needs have an opportunity to concentrate on general skills for a period one week from Year 8 onwards.

8. A wide range of subjects is available when pupils come to make their choice of GCSE subjects at the end of Year 9. Currently, all of the subjects studied in Years 7 to 9 are available at GCSE level, and with the addition of business studies and sociology. ICT continues to be taught across the curriculum to all pupils, and is available as three accredited options in Years 10 and 11. This varied choice of options puts pupils in a favourable position for choosing courses that they know will suit them at GCSE level and in the sixth form. A particularly good selection of subjects is available in the arts and the humanities. The curriculum steering group continuously reviews curricular provision, and a wider selection of vocational options is under consideration. Additional learning support is available for pupils in Years 7 to 9, where booster and catch-up programmes are offered in literacy, numeracy and science. Personal, social and health education, which includes careers education and the required sex and drugs awareness education, is taught by form tutors, and the school has quickly conformed with the new requirement to teach citizenship to all pupils as a separate entity.

9. One aspect in the curriculum, however, is not as strong as sometimes found. The school does not yet identify opportunities for developing pupils' multicultural awareness across the curriculum sufficiently methodically to give them a thorough understanding of life in a multicultural society.

10. The library and resource centre is open and staffed from before school until well after to enable girls to work independently, researching and using ICT. In addition to the high level of availability of subject staff to help individual pupils consolidate their coursework, departments make formal arrangements to help pupils with revision and consolidation. Lunchtime and after-school activities provided this term for assisting girls with their coursework are a homework club and supervised sessions in history, geography, mathematics, art and areas of technology. Recently, a medieval day, construction industry awareness day, a chemistry day at Surrey University, field work in geography and biology, a textiles trip and a psychology lecture visit to London Zoo have all supported the curriculum at different levels. Educational visits locally and abroad feature in almost all subjects. Foreign visits and holidays are organised for Years 7, 8 and 9 to France, Germany and an activities centre in the Ardeche. Pupils are attending a weekly meeting in preparation for their visit to China, planned for October, 2003.

11. In accordance with its philosophy of developing the whole person, the school makes the very best use of its staffing and the generous personal commitment of teachers to make available to pupils an exceptional range of extracurricular activities. Enrichment activities are provided at all levels in the school. They involve the wholehearted participation of sixth form students, often in an organising capacity. Personal development and endeavour are promoted by activities as varied as the Christian union and pre-school prayer group and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, which is well-established and popular, and in which girls have achieved success at all levels. Activities that develop leadership skills and team-building skills take place, such as cross-curricular days and activity weeks, for example the Army Game, Newspaper Day and Tram project. Challenges and competitions for older girls include Bar Council Mock Trials, Maths Challenges, Salter's Chemistry Challenge, the Eton Summer School and the Royal Holloway Science Course.

12. Work-related experiences are provided locally in connection with the Local Enterprise Business Partnership and the Rotary Club. The school participates in a Neighbourhood Engineers Scheme and a Young Enterprise Scheme.

13. Despite limited sports facilities, which the school plans soon to increase, opportunities are provided for girls to participate in activities ranging from swimming, rounders, dance, athletics, sports day to events further afield, including a Normandy Cross Country event. Regular sports activities this term include netball, badminton, trampolining, gymnastics and hockey.

14. Provision for extracurricular activities in the arts is a major strength of the school. In art, pupils contribute to the attractiveness of the school's learning environment with displays of work. GCSE and sixth form artists hold an annual exhibition, which includes photography. Visits include exhibitions around London and a regular sketching trip to Paris, which is very stimulating to the pupils' creativity. An art club meets regularly, and the school has benefited from an artist-in-residence.

15. An annual stage production is one manifestation of drama, which is well established on the curriculum in Years 7 to 11. In 2002, the production was 'The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe'. Pupils are encouraged to participate in local productions. Regular visits to plays and shows in the West End and elsewhere develop girls' appreciation of the theatre and literature. Drama groups visit the school and pupils' own creativity is stimulated by a writing club.

16. The most varied form of extracurricular activity is music. Over 400 girls receive instrumental tuition in school. They take national grade examinations, and the school is fortunate to have many gifted musicians. The very wide range of performing groups in school provide for girls of all ages and all levels of accomplishment. At an elementary level, girls can use keyboards at lunchtime to develop the skills learned in the classroom. Thirteen regular ensembles include senior and junior choirs, orchestras and bands, guitar and brass ensembles. Chamber music opportunities are provided for more accomplished musicians. A regular programme of concerts is given in school. Individual pupils and ensembles perform regularly in the area, including their participation in high profile local authority events. An annual school music festival is an important focus for the school's musicians.

17. Pupils' social awareness is translated into practical terms by their support for charities, often in sponsored activities, such as cake baking or a 'swimathon'. These have recently included the Terrence Higgins Trust, Cancer Research and the RSPCA.

Excellent leadership and management ensure that the school is run very efficiently and reflects its vision in its practice

18. The Rosebery vision is to develop 'a school that provides each girl with a rich and varied experience together with wide-ranging opportunities for success and enjoyment, and is a community to which girls are proud to belong and from which they will gain the best possible foundation for life'.

19. The management of the school at all levels is dedicated to turning the vision into a reality. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding, and the management of other senior staff is excellent. The headteacher and other senior staff have a thorough knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have a clear long-term vision for the development of the school. They provide examples of good practice for all colleagues through their effectiveness as teachers. The governing body plays an outstanding monitoring role and brings high levels of expertise to bear. This results in a shared philosophy for the school, planning that is both visionary and realistic, and policies and procedures for development that are courageous and practicable and ideally suited to the school's particular requirements.

20. The special strength of the school is its ethos, built on high expectations of pupils' achievement and the unselfish dedication of staff to enabling pupils to achieve their best. The current weakness, which is a problem faced by the school and not a failing on the part of the school, is the difficulty of maintaining a full quota of suitably qualified full-time staff. In facing this, the headteacher has bitten the bullet and decided that, wherever possible, full-time staff will be employed in preference to part-time teachers. This enables timetabling to be worked out consistently over the ten day timetable. Where the numbers of part-time teachers are excessive, teachers are not available at the beginning or end of the week, or both. This results in classes being shared between teachers. While split classes remain an unavoidable fact of life, by monitoring and supporting teachers, the school minimises the negative impact of this arrangement.

21. The staff handbook is a model of clarity, detailing procedures and expectations for every aspect of school life, so that a consistently high standard of provision can be maintained. Development planning reflects the actual needs of the school, because it is rooted in the school's vision and contributed to by all staff through the excellent communications existing between teachers and senior management. The handbook details what is expected of all staff with teaching and management responsibilities. The implementation of these job descriptions is continuously checked. The standard of subject leadership is high, and all teachers have full knowledge of the school's expectations of them.

22. The school's improvement planning, both short and long term, is closely focused on enabling the school vision to become a reality. The annual plan for improvement is carefully paced, has clear success criteria, accountability and financial implications. All components of the plan have at their heart the continued raising of standards through improving and refining provision. Staff contribute to school planning through the very effective line management system and forums such as the curriculum steering group. Through these means, they can see how they are contributing to fulfilling the aims and objectives of the school. The clearly focused priorities for 2002/2003 include developing further the effectiveness of lesson planning, ensuring an appropriate curriculum for all, by reviewing and improving pupils' work-related experiences, refining the teaching of literacy and numeracy, developing the course in citizenship and personal, health and social education. Other initiatives include further development of provision for gifted pupils and extending the vocational curriculum. In addition, the school plans to alleviate the administrative burden that staff carry and improve communication and other school procedures.

23. The adaptability of senior staff results in continuity of high quality provision despite staffing glitches. For example, the responsibilities of the special needs co-ordinator have been devolved to another senior member of staff during an interregnum. Senior staff maintain a close monitoring brief, where staffing difficulties are encountered.

24. Clear indications of the successful operation of the school's management are to be found in the school's very good academic standards and the excellent provision for pupils' all-round development. In the inspection, the school surpassed its improvement target in lesson quality for the year by ten per cent, in both the main school and the sixth form.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

There are no key issues for improvement.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

There are no key issues for improvement.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years Y7 – Y11	53
	Sixth form	51
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		46

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years Y7 – Y11							
Number	7	25	11	10	0	0	0
Percentage	13	48	20	19	0	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	3	29	15	4	0	0	0
Percentage	6	57	29	8	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 as each lesson represents approximately two percentage points...

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1074	240
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	32	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	5	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	113	5

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	77

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	26
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	31

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.6
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.4
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	0	216	216

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	210	194	204
	Total	210	194	204
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	97 (n/a)	90 (87)	94 (91)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	77 (n/a)	73 (74)	70 (69)
	National	32 (31)	45 (43)	33 (34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	215	190	201
	Total	215	190	201
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	100 (100)	88 (91)	94 (90)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	81 (80)	63 (78)	76 (67)
	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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	2002	0	210	210

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	171	207	208
	Total	171	207	208
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	81 (80)	99 (99)	99 (99)
	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	52.7
	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)

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	2002	0	90	90

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	0	102	102
	Average point score per candidate	n/a	6.2	6.2
National	Average point score per candidate	n/a	n/a	5.5

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	0	90	90	0	15	15
	Average point score per candidate	n/a	17.4	17.4	n/a	14.4	14.4
National	Average point score per candidate	n/a	17.7	17.4	n/a	11.4	11.4

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

Ethnic background of pupils

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

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
854	12	0
8	0	0
35	0	0
1	0	0
3	0	0
14	0	0
20	0	0
19	0	0
1	0	0
5	0	0
25	0	0
1	0	0
6	1	0
2	0	0
9	0	0
9	0	0
34	1	0

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

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

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	72
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	18.3

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	462

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	74.2
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26
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Financial information

Financial year	2001/2
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	£
Total income	3609435
Total expenditure	3592238
Expenditure per pupil	2734
Balance brought forward from previous year	166648
Balance carried forward to next year	17197

Key Stage 4	24
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	46
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	43

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	6
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	1314
Number of questionnaires returned	423

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	43	50	5	1	1
My child is making good progress in school.	39	54	3	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	29	60	4	1	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	21	58	14	4	3
The teaching is good.	27	61	4	1	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	21	52	20	3	4
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	45	43	8	1	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve her best.	61	35	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	22	51	21	3	3
The school is well led and managed.	41	49	3	2	5

The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.

The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.

38	52	5	2	3
34	52	7	3	4

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

25. In 2001, the last year for which national data is available for comparisons to be made, sixth form overall results were above the national average for all maintained schools and for all providers of sixth form education. Students' attainment was in the top five per cent in English literature, design and technology and geography. Results were well above average in mathematics and sociology, and above average in communication studies, German and sports studies. Results were average in art and design, biology and history, and below average in chemistry, economics and business and French. In other subjects, where numbers were too small for valid comparisons to be made, English language, physics and music, students' results were above or well above the national average. In the advanced vocational qualifications, results in health and social care were well above average and results were average in business studies.

26. No national data is available for 2002, but average pass rates were higher in almost all subjects in 2002 than in the previous year, with 46 per cent of passes at A or B grades, compared with 42 per cent in 2001. Results were lower, in 2002, only in English language, English literature and physics. Additional subjects in 2002 were history of art, drama and Chinese. Law continues to be a very successful subject at AS-level, but is not available at A-level.

27. Standards in work seen generally reflected the 2002 examination results. That is, standards are above the expectations for the courses. Exceptions are English language and literature, where current standards are higher than the 2002 results, following a period of staffing instability. Current standards in design and technology, economics and business and art and design are well above expectation for the course. Most students who take art have gained high grades at GCSE and, in response to very good teaching, achieve very highly. Students are achieving very well in music, following temporary staffing difficulties, which have now been resolved. No students took A-level music in 2002. Psychology is a new subject in the school, and no students have yet taken A-level. Their current achievement is good in relation to their starting points on the course. Results in biology have fluctuated somewhat in recent years due to variability in the teaching, which is good overall, and standards of current work meet course expectations. Students, including those for whom English is an additional language, those who are gifted and talented, and the small number with special educational needs make very good progress because their requirements are reflected in teachers' planning.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

28. Students are a credit to themselves and the school. They have excellent attitudes both to work and to the school. Students' thirst for knowledge and their enthusiasm for learning make a very good contribution to the very good progress they make in their studies. They work very hard in their lessons and do their homework very conscientiously. In addition, they play a full part in the life of the school community. Sixth form students are active in many of the extracurricular activities, such as the music

and drama clubs and sport. They enjoy visiting the theatre as a group. Their very good attendance at lessons reflects their enjoyment of school.

29. Excellent relationships exist amongst students and between students and teachers. Students work constructively together and, for example when taking part in class discussions, listen attentively to each other's contributions. Students respect their teachers and this is reciprocated. The confidence students have in their teachers gives them assurance to take part actively in lessons.

30. Students' personal development is excellent. As well as taking responsibility for their own learning, they take many responsibilities within school. For example, the prefects take their responsibilities very seriously and two students run the school council.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

31. Teaching in the sixth form is very good, and students learn very effectively. In over nine of every ten lessons seen, teaching was at least good. Teaching was very good in almost two thirds of lessons and some was excellent. No unsatisfactory teaching took place. The quality of students' learning closely reflected the teaching. Students maintained very high standards of response, even though the inspection took place during the week in which they finished their mock examinations.

32. In the thirteen subjects chosen for particular focus in the inspection, teaching was very good in English literature, art and design, music, sociology, product design, economics and business, health and social care and sports studies. Teaching was good in mathematics, biology, history, psychology and French. In the remaining subjects offered in the sixth form, all of which were sampled, teaching was at least good, and mostly very good. In English language and law, it was excellent.

33. The most obvious quality in all the teaching seen was the excellent relationships that exist between teachers and students. Lively interaction between teachers and students was an impressive feature of many lessons, and teachers fulfilled the function of very well-informed allies in a challenging but friendly learning environment. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, and have a clear understanding what the students need to know and do to succeed. Management of students was never an issue. Instead, teaching was a very productive partnership, where students felt confident enough to venture opinions and observations in response to teachers' support and encouragement. Teachers then developed students' views and increased their understanding through stimulating discussion and well-chosen tasks. In response to the teachers' very high expectations, students work very hard and sustain a high level of intellectual effort.

34. The ethos of the sixth form encourages students to achieve very highly in relation to their past performance and perceived potential. Results from students' previous work and examination performance is carefully analysed. Teachers and students are therefore well aware of students' track records and teachers set demanding grades towards which students are expected to work. Any lapses in students' performance are noted and followed up. This monitoring adds to the effectiveness and urgency of teaching.

35. The development of study skills to a high level is promoted and practised throughout the school. By the time students enter the sixth form, they are confident at carrying out independent research. Standards of writing are high. Standards of discussion are very high. Students' capacity for independent study is excellent, and constantly demonstrated by their studious use of the library and ICT facilities in school, and the high standards of homework they produce.

36. Teachers have a very thorough knowledge of schemes of work and examination syllabi. Their course and lesson planning is very effective, and is a constant focus in the professional development in

the school. Lesson plans take account of students' different starting points and needs. Teachers provide a high level of individual support to enable students to work at their individual best pace. Very good support is provided for the very small number of students with special educational needs, and for those whose family language is not English. The structuring of lessons is a great strength in the teaching. Lessons have specific objectives that are made clear to students. Teachers' explanations are very lucid, and students' knowledge and views are regularly developed and consolidated by teachers' incisive questioning. Very good use is made of the time available, which is mostly appropriate for the tasks in hand. The teacher's excellent planning was apparent in a Year 12 art lesson. Students were required to analyse and interpret a painting by Goldsworthy. The teacher carefully guided them through the process of observation and evaluation, for example of light coming through twigs, and she explained the historical perspective of the work. As a result, the students deepened their understanding of the technical, aesthetic and historical aspects, and considerably extended their technical understanding and vocabulary and skills in discussion. Excellent use was made of the time available in this lesson. Occasional problems occur, however, in art and design and science, where timetabling limitations do not allow double periods to be allocated. Despite good planning, some tasks cannot be suitably rounded off in a single lesson.

37. Teachers use a good range of suitable resources to support learning in sixth form subjects. However, the use of ICT is inconsistently developed across Years 12 and 13. During the inspection, effective use of computers was noted in psychology, sports studies, health and social care and sociology. Very good use is made of ICT in art and biology, even though students do not yet use computers for data logging in biology. Computers are used in product design, but not yet for computer-aided control and manufacture. Students independently use ICT in history, but the department has insufficient resources for ICT. Too little use is made of computers in mathematics, music and modern foreign languages. The school is aware of the need to extend the use of ICT, and is already working purposefully to achieve this, following the recent appointment of a suitable specialist to guide its development. Traditional resources for French are plentiful, but the modern foreign languages department needs a greater range of up-to-date resources to assist students in independently developing their language skills.

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

38. The school makes very good provision for its sixth form students by offering a broad range of AS and A-level studies and appropriate GNVQ courses. These match well the academic aspirations of the majority of its students. The school analyses their needs regularly, and adjusts what it provides in response to students' needs and aspirations. The curriculum steering group continuously monitors what is provided and seeks to match courses to students' perceived needs, within the limits of staffing availability. For example, courses in media studies and psychology are recent introductions to cater for students' changing interests and to fit them for the increased opportunities available in higher education. Students appreciate the wide range of courses available to them in the sixth form.

39. The school provides a wide range of A-level courses. Provision in the humanities and the arts is varied. History and geography are taught, and in addition, economics, sociology and psychology. Law is a very flourishing option in Year 12. Sports studies is available. Overall provision in the arts is very strong. Art and design includes photography and the history of art. Music, drama and media studies are taught to A-level. Vocational courses are currently available in advanced health and social care and in ICT. All students take a general studies option, which incorporates statutory religious education.

40. As in the lower school, an outstanding range of extracurricular activities provides valuable enrichment to the students' experience in the sixth form. Very good curricular provision for the arts is

supplemented by wide-ranging extracurricular activities. The school expects sixth form students to take a full part in the school community and gives them meaningful responsibilities, for example as prefects. Students have good opportunities to be involved with the local community. In particular, Year 12 students organise a very popular Christmas party for local retired people. Students' personal development is enhanced through such activities as working with senior citizens, taking part in running a business, and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. The range of educational visits locally and abroad is diverse, and supports and supplements every area of learning.

41. The provision for students' personal development is very good. As part of their studies, students have very good opportunities to study moral and social issues. The nature of these depends on the subjects they are studying, but all students from this Year 12 take a general studies course, which covers issues, such as tensions in the modern family and the distribution of power in society. The accredited course in Year 12 develops students' understanding in a good range of areas, including science and technology, beliefs and values, society and politics and arts and media. The Year 13 course is closely linked to students' practical needs. They receive guidance in connection with the procedures for applying to university. They are made familiar with financial matters relating to higher education and develop an awareness of the skills needed for living independently at university. Such aspects of what the school provides encourage students to feel and acknowledge that teachers respect them and treat them like adults.

42. Very good opportunities exist for students to develop an understanding of western culture through the excellent range of extracurricular activities. Satisfactory opportunities exist for students to develop an understanding of different cultures through various aspects of the curriculum, for example, migration within general studies and exploring 'how genuine is the ethical stance of Nike' in economics and business studies. However, opportunities to increase students' understanding of different cultures to prepare them for life in a multicultural society are missed in some subjects, including art and music.

43. Members of the sixth form undertake work shadowing as part of the preparation for selecting a career direction. Students, such as those following the health and social care course and those contemplating careers in medicine, veterinary science and physiotherapy, are encouraged and assisted to find suitable opportunities for work experience. Further practical opportunities are provided through the Young Enterprise Companies run by the school and through useful links with the Epsom and Ewell Business Partnership.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

44. Since the last inspection, significant progress has been made in the systems for using student data to set targets, and monitor and evaluate the work of the school and students. Overall, the arrangements for the assessment and monitoring of students' academic progress are excellent. The process starts early in year 11, where the national test results at the end of Year 9 are used to establish potential GCSE grades and hence enable the staff to identify students who are likely to achieve success at A-level. Subsequently, additional data from GCSE results and the information from the 'ALIS' and other systems are used to identify student potential and establish target grades.

45. Subject staff make use of the data, together with their own departmental systems, to monitor student progress. Information is communicated to the students in various ways to suit the nature of each subject. For example, in modern foreign languages, students receive progress grades once a month; in mathematics, data on the quality and quantity of all work is collected and used in discussion with students. Grades are provided each term in physical education, and in art teachers provide a series of one-to-one tutorials for students. These very effective systems provide accurate and reliable indications of progress. The students report that the direct guidance given by subject staff, whether this is in the form of grades or frequent oral comments is very valuable. Further development is required in a limited range of subjects where students, although aware of their current grades and potential results, do not always know exactly what they need to do to improve their work to attain higher grades.

Advice, support and guidance

46. An extensive sixth form preparation and induction programme informs students very well about the requirements for sixth form study so that they are well prepared for life in the sixth form. The induction programme includes an early review of progress. If problems are identified during the review, or at any other time, tutors, teachers and senior staff provide very strong and active support. The school takes great care to match students to courses and every effort is made to meet the subject combinations requested by the students.

47. Form tutors receive assessment information and use it to monitor progress against target grades. The system includes a twice-yearly review, where subject staff complete progress sheets. These are then used by tutors on a formal review day. This comprises interviews between tutors and students. However, the timing of the publication of the target grades, the dates of the review and the timing of some of subject module examinations do not always conveniently coincide. Some students find the formal reviews less helpful because they have already received excellent levels of informal assistance from subject staff. Students do however appreciate that their tutors are concerned about their welfare and are available to offer support where necessary. Students feel that teachers respect them and treat them like adults.

48. Students' attendance is carefully monitored and a register is taken each lesson. Senior staff rigorously follow up non-attendance. As a result, attendance at school and in lessons is very good.

49. Students are expected to take the initiative in seeking personal guidance for opportunities after the sixth form. They receive informal support and advice from subject staff, tutors and senior staff. Some students have reservations about the value of additional formal academic tutor interviews in view of the high standard of assistance they already receive.

50. There is a helpful range of special sessions to prepare students for higher education. University staff visit the school, and students visit universities and other institutions of higher education. Preparation includes sessions on finance and the use of 'gap' years. The role of specific careers service advice is limited. Overall, the students receive a very good service from the school, which, together with informal advice, provides them with a good awareness of the opportunities open to them.

HOW WELL IS THE SIXTH FORM LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

51. The leadership and management of the sixth form are excellent. The leadership provided by the headteacher is outstanding. Her vision of a sixth form in which all students are well supported and can achieve the highest standards, is shared by the management team. This common purpose, together with an acute awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of current provision, enables planning to be authoritative and confident and has led to the very good improvement achieved since the last inspection and the current very high standards of teaching and learning.

52. Within the leadership group, responsibilities are delegated clearly, and strict lines of accountability ensure that they are carried out efficiently. The deputy head responsible for the strategic management of the sixth form collaborates closely with the senior sixth form managers, thus providing an efficient channel of communication. The director of the sixth form and her deputy provide excellent day-to-day management and contribute significantly to strategic planning. They know the students very well and have much experience of the issues and problems that beset them at this stage. Regular meetings between managers and the team of tutors keep the sixth form running efficiently and with a shared sense of purpose. The director of sixth form ensures that the sixth form not only prospers as a separate entity but also maintains strong links with the main school.

53. The governing body is extremely effective in fulfilling its statutory duties and responsibilities, working closely with senior managers to set clear priorities for the development of the sixth form. Governors have a first-class understanding of its strengths and any relative weaknesses. They visit the school frequently to gauge the progress being made in individual departments, as well as improvement overall, and they share the headteacher's commitment to sustaining and building on the success of the sixth form.

54. Comprehensive and rigorous procedures have been established to monitor and evaluate the work of the sixth form. These involve all managers and teaching staff and are focused particularly on the quality of teaching and learning and the achievement of students. Governors also play an active part in the process, contributing very effectively to quality assurance. Findings from these procedures are documented methodically and form the basis for subsequent planning. Governors are currently investigating ways in which they can use their considerable and varied professional skills to increase the effectiveness of their contribution to the management of the sixth form, as they do, for example, in connection with the school's financial planning.

Resources

55. Staffing is good overall, despite the difficulties schools encounter in recruiting sufficient numbers of suitably qualified staff. The school deploys its most qualified and experienced staff in the sixth form. There is, therefore, a sufficiency of well qualified, and generally well experienced specialist staff. In mathematics, however, the staffing situation is only satisfactory because of the number of temporary teachers. Staffing in art and music is excellent and it is very good in modern foreign languages and physical education. The school has an excellent system of induction for all new staff. Several training sessions are run each term for the benefit of new staff. Unqualified and temporary teachers are supported by personal mentors if required. In-service training and staff development both make an important contribution to the improvement of management and teaching skills.

56. Despite significant deficiencies in some areas, the accommodation satisfactorily meets sixth form needs. Accommodation for design technology and history is good and that for music is excellent. Most subjects are suitably based for convenience in suited rooms. However, the accommodation for science has deficiencies and is cramped. Although not a safety hazard, the gymnasium structure is in need of repair. Students have to go off site for some of the wide range of activities offered in physical education. Opportunities for the school to host public events or whole-school gatherings are unfeasible because of the limited size of the hall. Accommodation where students can socialise is satisfactory.

57. The school is based on a long site and is housed in a large number of separate buildings, some of which are prefabricated. The lack of covered walkways between buildings makes movement between classrooms unpleasant during wet weather. The site has poor drainage which results in pools of water lying on the pathways and in other open areas. Some of the buildings with flat roofs are affected by occasional leaks. The school works hard to maintain the fabric of the buildings and to maintain a good state of decoration, but this is very expensive, because of their age and the quality of the construction. The toilets are in a poor condition, and this provision is inconsistent with the very high standard maintained by the school in connection with students' welfare.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

Sixth form

There are no key issues for improvement.

The school's current planning for improvement includes all of the minor issues noted in this Inspection report.

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 2001.

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	15	100	87	47	43	5.6	5.5
Chemistry	11	100	90	18	43	4.4	5.9
Biology	22	91	88	18	34	4.4	5.9
Physics	4	100	88	75	40	8.0	5.7
Design and technology	6	100	91	83	30	8.3	5.4
Economics	38	87	89	18	36	4.3	5.5
Sports studies	9	89	92	44	25	5.3	5.1
Art and design	25	92	96	44	46	6.2	6.6
Music	4	100	93	-	35	6.0	5.8
Geography	25	100	92	72	38	8.0	5.7
History	14	93	88	43	35	5.6	5.5
Sociology	25	100	86	48	35	6.6	5.3
English language	4	100	91	50	30	6.5	5.3
English literature	23	100	95	70	37	8.2	5.9
Communication studies	14	100	93	43	31	6.3	5.5
French	10	70	89	20	38	4.0	5.6
German	5	100	91	40	40	6.8	5.8
Business	5	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	10.8	10.5
Health and social care	10	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	16.2	10.8

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

59. Mathematics and biology were the focus subjects in this curriculum area. In addition, one lesson each of physics and chemistry were sampled. In physics, results in 2001 were above average, but the number of candidates was too small to evaluate against national statistics. In 2002, the standard was maintained. In the lesson observed, teaching was good; students showed very good attitudes and achieved well in an individual practical session on electrical resistance. In chemistry, results in 2001 were below average, but improved slightly in 2002. In the lesson seen, on chemical kinetics, teaching was very good and learning was good, compensating for some past underachievement. Standards met A-level expectations and attitudes were very good.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and A-level results are above average.
- Staff have high expectations of the students, who are well motivated and respond well to the support they receive.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT.
- Consistency in the use of assessment procedures.

60. The department provides an effective AS and A-level curriculum, covering the full range of modules. Results are consistently above the national average. A small decline in higher grades in 2001 was followed by an improvement in 2002. Seventy three per cent of the entry obtained grades A or B in 2002, representing an increase of 20 per cent on the previous year. Students' average points score also improved slightly. The good results in 2002 matched these students' GCSE results in Year 11.

61. Standards seen in lessons and in written work were above expectations for the course. Students work hard at practising their skills and acquire a thorough understanding of the mathematical principles involved. For example, high-attaining students in Year 13 effectively applied previous learning to develop their ideas in solving differential equations. In Year 12, students starting a new topic in mechanics were encouraged to develop strategies for finding centres of mass. The students responded very well to this challenging teaching approach, and offered good suggestions for developing appropriate strategies.

62. Students' files clearly indicate how well they organise their work and develop their learning skills. Some of the presentation and organisation of the work was exemplary. Files showed that the students had acquired a wide range of mathematical knowledge, and included examples of rigorous practice of the skills needed to attain high grades. In Year 12, prior to starting the course, students had effectively developed and practised the algebraic skills necessary to be successful at A-level. The response and enthusiasm of the students to the subject and their confidence in the teaching staff were important factors in students' overall good achievement.

63. The lessons seen, the evidence of work in student files and examination results indicate that teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers plan and explain the work well. They have high expectations of what the students can achieve, and the students respond well. In lessons observed,

teachers took great care to ensure that students understood the limitations of the methods used. For example in a mechanics lesson, the use of mathematical modelling was carefully described, emphasising how a practical situation needed to be approximated. In another lesson, a practical exercise enabled students to advance their understanding of 'probability'. In both cases, the approach went beyond the limitations of the textbook explanations. Occasionally, however, students were not given sufficient opportunities to enrich their understanding by moving beyond the confines of the text.

64. The department is developing a very good data collection system, based on the results of national examinations and frequent module tests. These provide a comprehensive picture of students' progress and give a good indication of future grades. Classwork and homework are marked as a matter of routine, and records are kept of its quantity and quality. It is intended that this data should be discussed with students so that their learning can be enhanced. However, the approach is not yet used fully within the department.

65. The leadership of the department is good, with very good systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of staff and students. The department has coped well with difficulties caused by a number of staffing problems, including the need to employ and co-ordinate the work of some temporary teachers. The level of staffing is satisfactory overall. Standards have at least been maintained, although some development work has been curtailed. Work in ICT has lagged behind and, although the department is well equipped with appropriate resources, no use is currently made to enhance the work in the sixth form. Staff new to the school feel well supported. Library resources are limited to a narrow range of conventional textbooks. Progress since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Students' positive attitudes to the subject and to their work.
- Some very good teaching methods, including a good level of independent investigation in Year 12.
- Good resources and library provision.
- Very good assessment, targeting and monitoring of added value.
- Good links with other institutions, fieldwork and professional development.

Areas for improvement

- Some prescriptiveness by teachers, that leads to neat written work, but inhibits independent and active learning.
- Some less effective planning that results in a lack of pace and some ad hoc teacher board work.
- Limited time for practical work due to single lessons.
- Cramped accommodation.

66. Results in the 2001 AS examinations were above average, but were slightly lower in 2002. A-level results in 2001 met the national average and were slightly higher in 2002. Over the previous five years, results have fluctuated, but broadly met the national averages both for all students and for girls. Achievement is consistent amongst all students, including minority ethnic groups and between different parts of the ability range. Performance in biology is on average slightly below that in other subjects taken by the same students. Compared with students' average GCSE performance, the results show satisfactory added value.

67. Standards observed in the school generally meet AS and A-level expectations. Students have good laboratory skills, for example in Year 13 when measuring levels of vitamin C. Year 12 students achieved well when planning and carrying out individual enzyme investigations. They were able to explain them accurately. The work seen met the course expectations, with examples of good standards in the higher-attaining group, especially in biochemistry and environmental study. Standards were also good in investigative coursework. Overall, students enter the course with average attainment, standards are slightly above course expectations, and achievement is good.

68. Standards of teaching and learning vary, but are good overall. There are some examples of very good teaching at both AS and A2 levels. These include the use of very well-produced teaching materials, for example when studying cell structure, biochemistry and ecology. The best teaching materials led to active learning. Students processed information through techniques which developed their understanding and use of specialist terminology in topics such as genetics and ecology. Some good numerical work led to accurate graphs of enzyme investigations, leaf growth and the effect of light intensity on photosynthesis. Literacy was well developed by the active learning, and included the writing of essays. In some topics, such as plant hormones, group research led to good learning and the production of useful and informative posters. ICT was used to promote learning through the use of Internet websites and word-processing, with some use of spreadsheets in the investigatory coursework. However, some aspects of ICT, such as data logging, are underused, for example in the work on fermentation. Students are well supported through the very good assessment procedures. This was evident in the careful feedback given to Year 12 students planning their enzyme experiments, in the support given to Year 13 students on planning an investigation into fermentation, and in the guidance for all students on study skills and folder maintenance.

69. The curriculum and assessment procedures are very good. Courses fully meet examination requirements. The good practice in active learning and in investigation result from departmental efforts and training provided within the school. Extending this further is a good means of raising students' achievement. In some lessons, for example the Year 13 work on vitamin C, the pace was too slow, although the laboratory skills were good. This problem of pace was compounded by the lack of any sessions longer than 60 minutes, although some teachers solved the problem by planning over a two-period time slot, with intervening measurements in the students' own time. Where planning was less effective, the time constraints affected the pace of work, especially where explanations, including board-work, were unclear and where students had too few opportunities for working independently.

70. Students' attitudes to work and to the subject were good, with very good attitudes to their field trip and to the work that allowed them more independence. The subject is popular. The management has some very good features. These include the improvements in curriculum, assessment and teaching methodology, brought about by some very good professional development. Teachers are well qualified and have good links with outside institutions. Resources, including the library, are good. The accommodation for sixth form biology is cramped, particularly for larger groups in Year 12. Overall, however, management is sound because the very good practice encountered is not universal, and students' achievement varies. Monitoring of teaching is not yet leading to students attaining consistently high standards. Although results are lower than at the time of the previous inspection, improvement since then has been satisfactory because of the developments in teaching and in investigatory coursework.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Product design

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

Strengths

- Examination results are well above average.
- Teachers have very good specialist knowledge and provide very good individual support for students, which enables them to achieve very highly.
- The department is very well managed and organised.

Area for improvement

- Students' awareness of industrial production methods through increased use of ICT.

71. Results in 2001, were well above the national average. Results in 2002 show a slight drop in the number of A and B grades achieved but remain very high. Students who took the examination in 2001 achieved very well compared with their predicted grades based on their GCSE results which were also well above the national average. The AS-level results in 2001 and the standard of work seen during the inspection are well above the standard expected of students at this stage nationally.

72. Standards of work of current students remain well above average. They show very good skills in both designing and making. Graphics skills are highly developed and students show how their ideas have evolved, with a good level of explanation and annotation at each stage. Students use the design process well; they analyse both the tasks and their research very fully before designing ideas of their own. Work is very well presented. Consideration is given to both standard production processes and mass production possibilities. Their basic skills in using computer-aided control and manufacture, however, are underdeveloped and students have less experience of using ICT for this purpose. Their ability to follow the design process enables them to work independently, using teachers mainly as a support and guide. Their skills are very well developed in using national standard data, handling and processing their own research data, and applying accurate measurements and estimations to both designing and manufacturing. This was seen in students' AS-level projects, for example a storage castle for children's play clothes and a container for a musical instrument. Both designs showed very good use of national standard data to ensure that a range of sizes was designed that was appropriate to the sizes of the users and the storage items. Students achieve high standards in their writing, and use effective ways of presenting their information in coursework assignments.

73. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers show very good knowledge of the subject and the examination requirements, which ensures students are fully prepared for all tasks. The teacher's knowledge was excellent, in a Year 13 lesson on computer-aided design, when, because of an ICT system failure, she was obliged without warning to change her lesson content. Teachers place good emphasis on individual achievement, and provide good opportunities for students to discuss their work in depth. Lessons seen had clear learning objectives, and contained a good variety of teaching methods. The teacher sometimes involved the whole group and sometimes worked with individual students. Teachers supported students well, enabling them to extend their basic knowledge of processes and skills in using a range of materials. Lessons were well planned to ensure that students' interest was maintained as their skills and knowledge were developed. Schemes of work are very good and follow the examination requirements very closely. Work is marked regularly and teachers provided helpful comments for students on how to improve further. Homework is set regularly, and, in Year 13, this often involves work related to the final course work projects. Very good relationships between students and their teachers impact beneficially on students' very good achievement. They discussed

their work in depth with their teachers, and were confident in the help and advice they received. Students felt they had a good level of help and support, both in and out of lessons.

74. Students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. They show high levels of interest, commitment and determination. The management of the subject is very good. Despite the recent changes in staff, continuity and stability have been maintained for the students. Teachers work very well as a team. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

BUSINESS

Economics and Business

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good, and teachers have very good subject knowledge and skills.
- Students learn very well, developing their independent learning skills through a very good range of activities.
- Students' very good attitudes.
- The very good contribution of the subject to students' social and moral education.

Area for improvement

- The breadth of opportunities for wider reading offered by the library.

75. This subject has been introduced to the sixth form curriculum since the last inspection, and has grown in popularity. In 2001, results were disappointing with very few students gaining the highest grades. However, these results were uncharacteristic of the department's record, as the previous year over half the students gained A or B grades. In 2002, most students exceeded their predicted grades, and once again around half the A-level results were at A and B grades. The department is very successful in helping students to outperform their predicted grades.

76. Current standards in A-level economics and business are well above course expectations, and students' achievement is very good. All students begin Year 12 with very little knowledge of the economics component of the subject. During the first term of the course, they move quickly from this base to a point where they have a good awareness of economic terms and concepts due to clear and well-structured teaching, which requires them to engage in independent research. For example, in the very good Year 12 lesson observed, the students were given a news article on government plans to change the system of fee payments for higher education. Students were quickly able to apply concepts of private and external benefits to the issue and engaged with the material with great intellectual effort. In a Year 13 revision lesson, very good teaching enabled students to use ratio analysis to make analytical and evaluative comments regarding 'Starbucks'. A particular strength of the lesson was that when considering the way in which the company successfully kept down costs, this was approached critically and from an ethical standpoint, focusing on the effects of the company's procedures on the coffee producers. In another very good Year 13 lesson, students commented critically on one another's answers to practice questions, thus enhancing their examination technique.

77. By Year 13, students have carried out a good range of interesting coursework investigations. Students enjoy the freedom to pursue their own interests within the parameters of the subject. For example an investigation into 'the significance of the ethical stance of BP' compared reports on the company from the 'Financial Times' and 'Greenpeace' to reach balanced conclusions. Another student's investigation into 'How genuine is the ethical stance of Nike?' was very well analysed and evaluated. The investigation displayed a high level of intellectual argument. These activities and the

material covered on the course contribute significantly to developing the very effective social and moral education of students.

78. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and skills. Students have a high regard for their teachers, whom they see as extremely approachable. One student said, 'Teachers here really do give you support when you ask for it', while another talked of 'teaching combining independence with backup and support.' The teaching motivates students and they greatly value the fact that theory is always made relevant.

79. The marking and assessment of students' work are very good. Students find the teachers' feedback very useful. Assessment objectives are made clear to the students, which helps them develop very good examination skills, and leads to very good results.

80. The subject is led and managed very well. Staff changes in the last few weeks have been managed well. Careful thought has been given to matching the strengths and experience of teachers to the areas of the course to be covered. The budget for the subject has been used effectively, although library provision for the subject is limited. Young Enterprise offers opportunities to support the development of business learning to sixth formers not taking the subject for A-level, and involves links with local businesses, as does the department's membership of the Epsom and Ewell Business Partnership. In the past, visits have had a very positive impact on students' learning but these have become less frequent. The newly-appointed head of department has positive ideas for further developing the subject such as developing the Intranet to support students' learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

81. Information and communication technology was not a focus subject in the inspection, but the subject was sampled. In the very good lesson observed, students were revising for an AVCE module in this new course, for which there are no previous results to report. Students were using a good range of computer skills to create advertising materials and spreadsheets. The teacher's extensive knowledge and clear explanations enabled students confidently to consolidate their knowledge and confirm their skills, and they achieved very well.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Sports studies

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

Strengths

- Teachers' excellent knowledge and understanding.
- Very good planning, and teaching that uses a good variety of activities and methods.
- Excellent relationships between students and teachers.
- Students' willingness to work hard to improve.

Area for improvement

- More frequent monitoring of work to ensure that students are continuously made aware of how to improve further.

82. A-level results in 2001 were above the national average, and the results in 2002 are similar, but no national comparators are yet available. In relation to their GCSE grades, the majority of students did as well as expected and a few did better.

83. Current standards of work are above average overall, and some is well above average. Students in Year 12 are responding very well in the theoretical aspects of the course, for example in studying Newton's laws of motion in the classroom and then applying the theories practically on the trampoline.

84. In Year 13, written work in the different aspects of the course shows that students' knowledge and understanding have developed well in such areas as the psychology of sport. Good standards of literacy and good competency in the use of ICT are factors in the very good achievement of both year groups.

85. Teaching is very good overall and, at times, excellent. It is characterised by very good planning, which makes use of a variety of activities, and methods which are challenging and motivating, enabling students to learn very well. This is underpinned by the teachers' excellent knowledge and understanding of the different aspects of the course. An example of this was the decision to follow the theory session, on 'centre of mass and angular motion', with the opportunity for students to look at and experience the working of the theories in a practical situation. The learning for those students in this session was excellent. Procedures for assessment are good. However, monitoring of students' day-to-day work is not always sufficiently frequent or rigorous to ensure that they are continuously aware of what they need to do to improve.

86. Relationships amongst the staff and between students and teachers are excellent. Students are very secure in the knowledge that they can approach any of their teachers for help and advice at any time during the course. They are very appreciative of the support they receive. Their attitudes to their work are very good and they are very keen to learn. A high proportion of students subsequently take up sport-related further education and careers.

87. Leadership and management of the department are very effective. The budget is managed very well to ensure that appropriate facilities are available to enable students to choose from a good range activities. The teachers are effectively deployed to derive maximum benefit from their individual strengths. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. High standards have been maintained and the numbers taking the course have risen steadily.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Health and social care

Overall, the quality of provision in health and social care is **very good**.

Strengths

- Enthusiastic and very knowledgeable teaching.
- Very good relationships between teachers and students.
- Well-motivated students who work well together and want to succeed.
- Very good resources, including ICT and the library.

Area for development

- Students' understanding of examination requirements.

88. Results were well above the national average in 2001. In 2002, results were similar, but national figures are not yet available for comparison.

89. Current standards of work are above average overall, and often well above average. Students in both years achieve very well overall. Students in Year 12 showed considerable depth of thought in discussing issues related to legal principles. They were articulate and forthright in expressing their

views, and were willing to listen to and consider the views of others. Year 13 students successfully drew on previous knowledge and learning in science to tackle a new aspect of the course on physical health. Much of their coursework shows very effective research, which enables them to produce coherent and worthwhile assignments. A good proportion of this work observed in Year 13 was well above average.

90. Teaching is very good overall and students learn very well. Lessons are brisk, challenging and well-planned, and employ a very good variety of activities and methods. Very good preparation and planning, underpinned by teachers' very good knowledge and understanding, are all evident, and contribute highly to ensuring very good learning for the students. Procedures for assessing students' work are very good. Assessment of assignments is clear and marking is thorough, with very helpful comments. This ensures that students know at what level they are working and what they have to do to improve further. Relationships are very good both between students and teachers and amongst students themselves.

91. Students' attitudes to their work are generally very good. They work well together in small groups and are keen to share their views and listen to those of others. They are able to work independently and have developed good research techniques, using the good range of resources purposefully, including computers and the subject library. They respond well to and appreciate the support they receive through their assignments. However, some feel that they are uncertain about exact examination requirements.

92. A new head of department has recently come into post. Leadership and management of the subject are good. Monitoring of teaching and plans for developing the subject further are good. Resources are very good. This course has been introduced since the last inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

93. The focus subjects in this area were art and design and music. Photography, media studies and drama were also sampled. AS-level results in drama are very good. In the well-planned lesson sampled, the good teaching reflected good subject knowledge and a good sense of pace. Students are very committed, and they achieve well. The standards of work were above expectations for the course. Photography and media studies are new courses with, as yet, no examination results to report. In a Year 12 photography lesson, the small number of students were achieving very well, and standards were above course expectations. Students discussed their ideas confidently. The teaching was very good, and the teacher analysed each student's work constructively, enabling them to achieve very well. In the media studies lesson observed, also in Year 12, teaching was very good and students showed excellent attitudes. All students were very well challenged in a topic on 'the structure of soap operas'. Perceptive discussions took place as well as some very effective independent learning. Good opportunities were provided for using ICT.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- Very high examination results.
- Very effective teaching that leads to high standards of creative work.
- The leadership and management and very effective teamwork of staff.
- Students' attitudes, commitment, hard work and excellent independent learning skills.

Area for improvement

- Lessons are often too short to enable tasks to be suitably rounded off.

94. The school currently offers AS-level and A-level courses in art and design. These include fine art, photography, and history of art. In 2001, the combined results at A-level were similar to the national average both for all schools and for girls' schools. In 2002, the results were slightly higher, with particular successes in fine art and photography. The trend, based on the point score, is a steadily rising one. Almost all students exceeded their targets, which were based on their achievement in the AS-level examinations. Although the majority of students who join sixth form courses have attained very high GCSE grades in art and design, their overall results across a range of subjects is a little lower. The fact that many go on to gain the highest grades at AS and A-level shows very good achievement.

95. The GCSE results improved greatly in 2002, and the AS and A-level art and design courses have grown in popularity. Currently, 76 students are entered for AS and A-level courses, including some who take more than one art and design option. Once students enrol onto courses few drop out. Some students go on to art foundation courses, others go to university to study the sciences, mathematics and the humanities. Art and design is a subject that students enjoy and many want to continue studying, even though they go on to take courses outside the arts. These students leave with a very broad range of experiences and accomplishments.

96. The work of current students is well above the standard expected at this stage and their achievement is very good. Most students have achieved A* or A grades in art at GCSE, and from this advantageous starting point they make significant gains in their knowledge and understanding and personal development. Visits to galleries and exhibitions are often used as stimuli for individual units. This leads to excellent research and intellectually challenging work. Students in their first term produced some very high quality work, following a weekend trip to Paris. They worked very hard and produced impressive painting and research work in their sketchbooks.

97. Students who go on to A-level courses are very focused and, because they receive high quality feedback from teachers, have a clear idea of what is required by the examination syllabus. They use their time wisely. They produce work that demonstrates very good breadth and creative experimentation across a range of media. They recognise the scope for mixed media work that borrows from fine art, photography and computer-generated imagery. Many tap into their own cultural traditions and interests and all maintain an individual and lively curiosity about factors that influence the work of artists and designers.

98. The very good teaching leads to very good learning. Staff have excellent subject knowledge. They work very effectively as a team, and students benefit from being taught by two or three teachers whose expertise allows them to make connections and to work across several arts disciplines. Teachers share the highest expectations, and are constantly refining their strategies for assessing work and sharing their observations with students. As a result, students achieve very well. Lessons are taught at a brisk pace, often using timed tasks effectively to structure lessons and give time for students to share their responses with others. Students' have excellent attitudes to learning. They make very good use of their time and work very well independently. However, to raise standards further, and maximise the impact of teaching on students' learning, students at this stage of their education would benefit from lessons that were longer than one hour. Students speak confidently, are very articulate when talking about their work with the teacher, but are less assured when they express their ideas to the whole group. Sometimes, lessons do not allow sufficient time to explore ideas in greater depth and to reinforce, refine and modify responses.

99. The leadership and management are very good. The department development plan presents a very clear view of what improvements are planned for the future and how they will be realised. The vision of the new head of department has enabled an already successful department to become even

more successful. Teamwork in the department is excellent. Standards are improving and there has been a sharp rise in recruitment figures. Improvements in GCSE examination results have prompted changes to the planning and ordering of the units in Years 12 and 13, to very good effect. The curriculum is now more coherent and builds very well on students' prior attainment. The programme of monitoring by the head of department, both in terms of lesson observations and work reviews, is at the heart of current improvements.

100. The department has a good range of resources and books in addition to computers and suitable software, all of which students use very purposefully. The additional numbers of students choosing to study art and design place pressure on the accommodation. Studios have to be shared and there is insufficient space to enable students to continue their work outside lessons.

101. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. There is now a technical assistant who ably assists with the day-to-day organisation of materials and equipment. Results have improved. The use of computer-generated work for research and image manipulation has been greatly improved. The high quality work around the school, visits to galleries in this country and abroad and visits by practising artists all help to raise the quality and profile of the subject. Art makes a very strong contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural life of the whole school community.

Music

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

Strengths

- Teaching is enthusiastic and very carefully planned; teachers have excellent subject knowledge and readily share their passion for music with students.
- Excellent leadership and management of the subject have resulted in very good development since the last inspection.
- Students' performance skills are very good, and opportunities for extracurricular music are excellent.
- Relationships between students and teachers are excellent and create a very supportive learning environment.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT.

102. The department offers courses in AS and A-level music. Results in the 2001 A-level examinations were above the national average, and students performed as well in music as they did in their other subjects. There were no A-level entries in 2002, as a result of significant staffing problems, which have now been resolved. The 2002 AS results were very high, but national averages are not yet available for comparison. The results are a progressive improvement on those of recent years. All seven students completed the AS course, of whom five are continuing with music in Year 13.

103. Standards of work of current students are above the national average in the Years 12 and 13, which represents very good achievement. Students have very well developed skills in harmonic analysis, for example in Year 12 folders of work where students clearly identified Phrygian cadences, suspensions and 'false relations' in a pavanne by Holbourne. Performance standards are very high, for example a stunning, recorded piano performance by a Year 13 student of the 'Prelude and Fugue in D Minor' by Bach. Year 12 students are better performers than composers. Some of their compositions are too short and lack development.

104. Students in both years are very good independent learners and also collaborate effectively in small groups. They have very good literacy skills, and express their understanding clearly and in detail

when answering questions orally or in writing. Performance skills are greatly enhanced by expert tuition from the 26 visiting instrumental teachers and regular opportunities to take part in high quality ensembles. Students whose first language is not English make good progress with the practical aspects of the course but are less confident with the written work.

105. Students learn very well. They are highly motivated naturally and as a result of the very good teaching, through which the teachers' passion for music is communicated to students. A significant strength is the consistency of teaching quality in both classroom and instrumental lessons. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. Through the teachers carefully structured planning, clear explanations and expert demonstrations, students conspicuously improve their skills, and extend their understanding and appreciation of the music they study. All teachers expect a great deal from students in terms of effort and organisation, and students respond by working very hard in lessons and in their independent study time. Teachers establish a superb atmosphere for learning through excellent relationships; they inspire students, who respond very well to the challenges set for them. Students have access to a wide range of learning resources and text books, but teachers are aware that they do not yet make enough use of ICT to support students' learning. Music from cultures other than western is not studied enough, which restricts students' wider knowledge of musical styles and genres.

106. Teachers prepare students very well for examinations through a series of well-planned tasks. They find interesting ways of teaching concepts that can be boring, as was seen in a Year 13 lesson on the analysis of Bach chorale harmonisations. Students identified musical devices such as 'tierce de Picardie' and modulation by skilfully performing the chorales in pairs at the piano. In a Year 12 lesson on aural dictation, they created their own melodic and rhythmic tests and played them to each other. The respect that students have for their teachers is clear from their responses in class, and in the high regard they have for the quality of tuition provided. They appreciate the fact that teachers are always happy to give them extra help outside lessons.

107. The leadership and management of the subject are excellent. The head of department leads a happy, hard-working and highly skilled team of musicians who believe in ensuring that students achieve the highest possible standards in lessons and extracurricular activities. The high standards in the subject are assured by the shared commitment of teachers to achieving excellence, backed by impeccable planning and organisation. The department provides a traditional diet of activities that are well matched to the needs of its students. The purpose-built music block provides excellent accommodation, although some of the older rooms used for instrumental tuition are in a poor state. Because all the rooms are used throughout the day students find it difficult to gain access for their independent study and have to rely on practising at home.

108. The department is a hive of activity throughout the school day and beyond. The extracurricular contribution of music to the enjoyment and achievement of pupils throughout the school is excellent. Over 400 pupils learn instruments, which is a very high proportion. As a result, the music department makes a very significant contribution to the school's ethos and to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and students. The subject has made very good progress since the previous inspection.

HUMANITIES

109. The focus was on sociology, history and economics, but geography, law and religious studies were also sampled. Geography examination results were very high in comparison with the national average in 2001, and students achieved very well. Similar results in 2002 show that this very high standard has been maintained. This represents a significant improvement since the last report. The lesson observed was very good. Through a series of well-planned activities, students gained a very secure understanding of the re-location of services and the changing nature of the central business district of cities. In a very well-taught religious education lesson on 'religion and science' in Year 11, students made a serious comparative study of scientific and religious ideas since the time of Plato. They showed a very good understanding of a range of difficult terms and concepts, and achieved high standards of discussion. Law is taught only to AS-level in Year 12, and results are very high. In the excellent lesson observed, students, with the help of information sheets of high quality and very

searching questioning from the teacher, developed considerable knowledge and understanding of the role of lay people in the legal system. Students achieved very high standards of discussion.

History

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

Strengths

- Students and teachers enjoy very good working relationships.
- Teachers' very good subject knowledge supports students' learning well.
- Students display very good attitudes to the subject, which is a popular option.

Areas for improvement

- More resources for ICT within the department.

110. A-level results in 2001 were average. Results in 2002 were similar, but national statistics are not yet available for comparison. Results from the large number of entries in the 2002 AS-level examination were in line with national expectations. Students' attainment is broadly in line with what might be expected from their attainment at GCSE.

111. History is a very popular choice, and students begin their A-level studies with a wide range of prior attainment. Current standards in Year 12 are above course expectations and students' achievement is good. They show well developed skills in listening and discussion and perceptively apply historical principles and values to contemporary issues. Standards of work of current students in Year 13 are above national expectations. In one lesson, Year 13 students confidently discussed reasons for and against the reform of relief for the poor in the nineteenth century. Higher-attaining students strengthened their case by drawing on previous reading, for example the theories of Malthus, and demographic statistics from the time.

112. Overall, teaching in the lessons observed was good, and students learned effectively. In one lesson, teaching was very good as a result of the teacher's confident subject and syllabus knowledge, detailed planning, and a clear focus on learning objectives. In this Year 12 lesson, the teacher encouraged the students to apply their own values when evaluating Hitler's indoctrination of German youth. Students showed a good understanding of the impact of propaganda, using filmed and written evidence of propaganda. The teacher's interventions ensured that students of all levels of attainment were well challenged and their interest maintained.

113. Students' attitudes are very good. They enjoy the subject and work hard. Students value highly the commitment and the strong support of their teachers.

114. The department is well led and managed. Resources are generally satisfactory, although the library provision needs to be extended to allow for independent learning and wider reading for all topics. Currently, few opportunities are provided for students to further their studies through attending conferences and lectures. Despite a lack of resources for ICT in the department, students make regular use of computers for research and drafting essays. Accommodation is good. The last inspection report indicated that some students achieved below expectation. This situation no longer applies. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Sociology

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching that results in very effective learning.
- The high attainment of students, their very good progress and achievement.
- Students' enthusiasm for the subject and the very good relationships that enhance their learning.

Area for improvement

- The use of short-term targets focused on specific learning objectives.

115. Results, in 2001, were well above the national average, with a very high proportion of students achieving grades A and B at both AS and A2 levels. Over the past three years, students' attainment has been significantly higher than in their other subjects. Students have achieved very well. Results for 2002 suggest that these high standards have been maintained, although national comparators are not yet available. Such success ensures that very few students fail to complete the second year of the advanced course.

116. The standards of work of current students are also above national expectations. In Year 13, the great majority of students are achieving very well in relation to their previous learning. In a lesson on 'crime and deviance', students were clearly aware of the differences between the positivist and interpretivist perspectives. They have a very good understanding of basic terms and concepts and applied these with perception in their study of 'suicide'. They gave explanations for patterns and were aware of differences in interpretations of statistics. In another lesson, they drew on their prior learning to compare the relevance of traditional and modern classifications as they studied different religious organisations. The work samples included well-structured and closely-argued essays, for example, on 'women, gender and crime'. Higher-attaining students enrich their essays through wider reading, giving examples from appropriate case studies and drawing convincing conclusions.

117. Year 12 students have made very good progress in a relatively short time. Students who started the course with no previous experience of the subject are now working at a level similar to those who had gained very good GCSE results. In the lesson seen, students had a good understanding of the difference between qualitative and quantitative information, and of such key issues as reliability, validity and representativeness. They selected the most useful approaches and were able to justify their decisions. Higher-attaining students were clearly aware of the implications of their choices. Students' previous work contained more examples of assessed work than did the files of Year 13 students. This reflects the appropriate emphasis placed upon essay skills in the teaching at this stage. Overall, students are working above the level expected and are achieving very well.

118. The quality of teaching in lessons seen was very good, as was students' learning. The students' written work shows that teaching is also very good over time. Each lesson observed began with questions and discussions that rehearsed and consolidated previous learning. This, together with end-of-lesson reviews that drew together what students had learned, provided continuity and an understanding of how well they were doing. Teachers took care to select examples that stimulated students' interest, for example religious organisations deemed 'newsworthy', and the suicides of 'pop' personalities. Practical activities are very popular and effective, Year 12 students spoke enthusiastically of their 'deviation from social norm' experiments; topics ranged from asking permission to speak at home to the effect of noisy behaviour in a public library. Topics were carefully minuted with conclusions. The teaching places an appropriate emphasis on methodology. Students' listened carefully to one another and were very willing to contribute to discussions. The teachers' high expectations led to effective independent learning. Teachers provided support through praise and

encouragement and their knowledgeable presentation of information. Students' essays are marked thoroughly, the teachers providing much useful advice for improvement.

119. The majority of students make good use of the facilities available for independent learning. They are confident in their use of books and ICT. The library contains a satisfactory range of books. Students have very good access to computers. Students' interest in the subject and very good relationships with teachers contribute to their enjoyment of the course and commitment to learning. Their progress is carefully monitored and, where problems are identified, as in the case of the under-achievement of a small number of Year 13 students, action is taken. All students are set longer-term targets based on prior attainment, but short-term targets based on specific learning goals are underused.

120. The very good teaching and learning result from the very good leadership and management of the subject. There has been a good improvement since the last report. The recently-appointed head of department is committed to building on what has already been achieved and to raising standards further. She has provided very good support for staff new to the course. Suitable priorities for development have been identified. The department has the capacity and commitment necessary for still further development.

Psychology

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

Strengths

- Students work hard and have very positive attitudes, and they learn well independently.
- Students display good speaking and listening skills in brainstorming and plenary sessions.
- The very good assessment procedures make it clear to students how to improve their work.
- Students' learning is enhanced by the good teaching methods and materials used.

Areas for improvement

- Sharing of the best teaching practice.
- Library provision to support students' learning.

121. Results in the 2001 AS examination were above average, and they were higher in 2002. No A-level examinations have as yet been taken. There is no evidence of a differential performance amongst minority ethnic groups or between different parts of the ability range. Performance in psychology is on average slightly better than in other subjects taken by the same students, but the difference is not statistically significant. Compared with students' average GCSE performance, the results at AS-level show good added value.

122. Standards of work seen exceeded AS and A-level expectations. Work included good essays on such subjects as 'gender development', 'animal navigation', 'gender identity' and 'social development'. Students entered the course with lower GCSE grades than in many of the A-level subjects, and hence their achievement is good.

123. Teaching and learning are good overall. There were some examples of very good teaching at both AS and A-levels. The best teaching led to active learning in which the students effectively brainstormed in pairs or in groups and produced very effective concept maps on 'relationships' in Year 13 and on 'forgetting' in Year 12. Numerical work was good, although the statistical understanding of some students was below average. Literacy was well developed by the active learning techniques, especially in the very good speaking and listening sessions. In some topics, group research led to good learning and the production of informative presentations. ICT was used well to promote learning

through Internet research. Lower-attaining students were well supported through very good assessment. Their note taking was generally briefer, but effective.

124. The curriculum and procedures for assessment are very good. Arrangements fully meet the requirements of the examination board for AS and A-level study. The good practice in active learning and in investigation result from departmental efforts and training provided within the school, in which the psychology department took a leading role. Teachers' knowledge of the subject is good. All work is carefully planned. However, planning was most successful where it gave students scope to work independently.

125. Students' attitudes to work and to the subject were very good, for example in relation to experimental exercises on 'primacy in memory'. The subject is increasingly popular. Leadership and management are good, and have some very good features. These include the improvements in curriculum, assessment and teaching methodology, brought about by some very good professional development. The teachers are well qualified and the temporary teacher has good knowledge and understanding of the subject. Resources are sound, although the library needs to be developed to meet more effectively the needs of the A-level course. Overall, management is good and has coped well by maintaining standards during a temporary staffing problem. Psychology was not offered at AS or A-level at the time of the last inspection.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

126. English literature and French were the focus subjects in this area. In addition, lessons in English language and German were sampled. A-level English language results were very good in 2002, but with a small number of students. In the lesson sampled, students following the English language course in Year 13 achieved excellent standards in response to excellent teaching. They used their very good understanding of difficult concepts in linguistics to explain how these apply to everyday speech and social situations. The lesson included challenging discussion and a high standard of note taking. A-level results in German, with very small numbers of candidates, reflect the aptitude of the students, and, in 2002, included some passes at grade A. In the lesson observed, teaching was very good, with constant use of the target language by the teacher. Pupils made substantial additions to their knowledge of vocabulary, achieving very well and working at a brisk pace.

English literature

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching based on very good subject knowledge, stimulating resources and varied teaching methods which inspire students' commitment and enthusiasm.
- Excellent student attitudes and behaviour and high levels of commitment.
- Students' good independent thinking skills.

Area for improvement

- The advice given to students to help them know how to improve further.

127. In 2001, the most recent year for which validated figures are available, results in A-level English literature were in the top five per cent nationally. The proportion of students gaining A and B grades was very high, and nearly twice the national proportion. Over three years, results were well above national averages overall and better than other subjects taken in the school. In 2002, results were lower, with a smaller proportion of students gaining the highest grades.

128. Current standards are well above average. In Year 12, students achieve very well in English literature by the end of their first term, because teachers enable them to utilise and

build methodically upon skills learned previously. Students annotate texts thoughtfully to locate and discuss sensibly key quotations and ideas. They acquire a thorough understanding of character and theme in a play, for example 'Othello', building up detailed files and personal notes, which they use well to support subsequent written assignments. In Year 13, students of English literature achieve well. They read and understand well a good range of novels, poetry and dramatic texts. Their ability to take notes selectively and to absorb a good variety of background reading helps them to think independently and analytically, as well as to argue persuasively in written assignments. For example, a well-researched essay on E.M.Forster's 'Howards End' dealt lucidly with a wide range of issues. It identified narrative technique and use of symbolism, and explored historical and social assumptions about gender, while drawing perceptively and judiciously on well-understood critical texts.

129. Students' attitudes and behaviour are excellent. They demonstrate a first rate enthusiasm for the subject and willingness to apply themselves, whether as individuals, or when working together in groups. All teaching is very good or better. In one in four lessons it is excellent.

130. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers know their students well, and deploy good subject knowledge to question and prompt them in class, which enables them to achieve very well. Standards of work seen are an improvement on the most recent results because a more stable team of teachers has planned well to improve the consistency of students' achievement. Students benefit from helpful guidance on note taking, appropriate homework and frequent opportunities to develop and concentrate their powers of analysis. They discuss ideas productively in class, stimulated by well-focused questioning. Teachers combine very good subject knowledge with stimulating methods, which hold students' interest well. For example, a group of students analysed shrewdly and confidently 'proposal and marriage' in 'Pride and Prejudice' by collaborating to produce a version of 'Blind Date', featuring characters from the book. Teachers mark written work conscientiously with helpful attention to detail, and students are given a clear picture of their strengths. Occasionally, however, students need more specific advice on what they should do to improve further.

131. The library offers a good range of background reading of novels, plays and poetry. Computer facilities are good and students make good use of them to extract background information and for presenting their work.

132. English teaching benefits from very good leadership and management, and the head of department has done much to help new members of staff to settle in. This had had a beneficial effect on the consistency of teaching. As a result, standards are now higher than those indicated by the most recent results. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

French

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good and teachers have very good subject knowledge and linguistic skills.
- Relationships are very positive and enhance students' learning.

Areas for improvement

- Make greater use of ICT.
- Acquire more resources of listening materials for students to use independently.
- Provide opportunities for students to have contact with people in French-speaking countries.

133. Results in French AS and A-level in 2001 were below the national average. Most students gained a pass grade but the number of higher grades was small. In 2002, results were higher, but national averages are not available for comparison. Most students' results were lower in French than in their other subjects in 2001, but comparable in 2002. Over recent years, the department has had an open-door policy for the recruitment of students and some have been accepted with a grade C at GCSE level. Students achieve well in relation to their previous attainment.

134. Current standards are above course expectations. Students' listening comprehension is well-developed. In Year 12, most students understand lessons conducted entirely in French spoken at normal speed. Many students in Year 12 have good pronunciation and some students can speak with confidence and fluency on prepared topics, but a few have difficulty expressing simple ideas in French. Reading skills in Year 12 are above average, although some students do not have sufficient basic vocabulary to tackle authentic texts successfully. Writing skills in Year 12 are good overall but vary considerably. Some students write very accurately, whilst others have gaps in basic grammar and make simple spelling errors. In Year 13, most students have good listening and reading skills. Some are confident speakers of French and can discuss topics freely and accurately. A few students in a Year 13 lesson were very reluctant to speak in front of the class, however. Most Year 13 students have a good knowledge of French grammar. The range, quantity and quality of written work in both Years 12 and 13 are variable, and many students have impressive folders containing a wide range of well-presented, accurate written work.

135. The teaching in the lessons observed was very good, as was students' learning. From a scrutiny of written work, it was clear that teaching and learning over time are good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and linguistic skills and they work well together using similar teaching techniques. They have a very good knowledge of examination criteria and requirements and consequently the marking of students' work is very effective. They spend much time discussing work with individual students and then providing targeted support. Relationships are very good and students enjoy lessons and appreciate the support they are given. Teachers prepare lessons very well and explain lesson objectives very clearly. They teach lessons almost entirely in French which develops listening and speaking skills well. Effective use is made of a wide range of teaching techniques, activities and authentic materials including video extracts. Students have opportunities to work independently in groups and pairs. Lessons are brisk and purposeful and most students respond well to the challenge and work with enjoyment and enthusiasm. They start tasks quickly and remain on target until they are complete. Generally students are progressing well, but a few are limiting their achievement by not making sufficient effort outside lessons to learn vocabulary and structures. Homework is used very effectively to consolidate learning.

136. The leadership and management of the subject are good. Teachers plan lessons very carefully. Procedures for assessment are very good. Plans for developing the subject are appropriate. The subject provides a good range of learning experiences. All students are allocated time with the French assistant who contributes well to the development of their listening and speaking skills. The learning resource centre has a good range of dictionaries, reference works and set books, but there are no French CD-ROMS and network of French programs. Students have insufficient listening materials on cassette for independent learning. Too little use is made of ICT, and this is an important area for development. The school does not organise an e-mail link or exchange with a French school for the sixth form, which is an area for development. Improvement since the last report is satisfactory.