

INSPECTION REPORT

WILSON'S SCHOOL

Mollison Drive

Wallington

SM6 9JW

LEA area: Sutton

Unique reference number: 103007

Headteacher: Mr D M Charnock

Reporting inspector: Mrs S Browning
1510

Dates of inspection: 10th – 14th March 2003

Inspection number: 249741

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Grammar Selective

School category: Voluntary Aided

Age range of pupils: 11-18 years

Gender of pupils: Male

School address: Mollison Drive
Wallington
Surrey

Postcode: SM6 9JW

Telephone number: 020 8773 2931

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr R E Mc Alister

Date of previous inspection: 19th May 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities (sixth form)	Aspect responsibilities (sixth form)
1510	Sheila Browning	Registered inspector	Educational Inclusion	Standards of attainment and achievement Teaching and learning Provisions for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development Leadership and management
10049	Michael Mc Carthy	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? Partnership with parents Efficiency
1246	Mike Fitzgerald	Team inspector		
30128	Shirley Stanley	Team inspector		Sixth form co- ordinator
24709	John Cutler	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages English as an additional language	
15576	David Nebesnuick	Team inspector	History Business education	Staffing
20767	Jeremy Royle	Team inspector	Information and communication technology	

6044	Roger Perkins	Team inspector	Mathematics	How good are the curricular and other opportunities?
31701	Graeme Rudland	Team inspector	Music	
3892	Eric Needham	Team inspector	Physical education	Accommodation
32166	Nasim Butt	Team inspector	Biology & Chemistry	
2391	Peter Gossage	Team inspector	Physics	
1578	Maureen Sinclair	Team inspector	Economics	
32209	Jane Burnett	Team inspector	Geography	Resources
31688	Brian Mc Gonagle	Team inspector	Art and design	
22958	Terence Bailess	Team inspector	English	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Wilson's is a voluntary aided selective grammar school with specialist college status in mathematics and computing. It is about the same size as many other secondary schools, with 908 boys aged 11-18. It is oversubscribed and has 95 more pupils than at the time of the last inspection. Pupils are of much higher than average attainment on entry, reflecting the selective nature of the school. The percentage of pupils identified as having special educational needs is 0.8 per cent; this is well below the national average. The number of pupils with statements of special need is well below the national average. The proportion of pupils receiving free school meals, at 0.5 per cent is well below the national average. The school serves a wide catchment area. Pupils come from homes that are socio-economically mixed. The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language at 33 per cent is high. None is at an early stage of language acquisition. The school population is culturally, ethnically and linguistically diverse with over 40 languages represented. The main minority ethnic groups are of Indian, Asian, and Chinese heritage.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an outstandingly effective school. Leadership and management are very strong with excellent leadership by the headteacher and senior management team. The considerable contribution made by other staff creates a purposeful atmosphere in which all pupils are encouraged to achieve the highest possible standards. It is a very inclusive school. Pupils achieve excellent standards. An effective teaching and learning partnership is established. Pupils' attitudes to learning are a significant contributory factor to the standards achieved. Behaviour, personal development and relationships are all very good. The quality and range of learning opportunities are very good. Enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities are excellent. The combination of all these factors ensures that the school provides excellent value for money.

What the school does well

- Standards are very high and are well above the national average. The proportion of pupils obtaining 5 or more GCSE grades at A*-C is consistently very high.
- Leadership and management by the headteacher and senior management team are excellent. Monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance leading to effective action are excellent.
- The very good teaching enables all pupils to make very good progress in their work. The academic, sporting and creative progress of pupils is promoted most effectively.
- The curriculum is wide ranging with an excellent and extensive range of enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities. Overall provision for pupils' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.
- The school promotes very good standards of behaviour. Personal development and relationships are very good. The focus on pupils' welfare is a central element of the strong pastoral system.

What could be improved

- The use of and access to information and communication technology across the curriculum.
- Aspects of the accommodation are unsatisfactory.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has responded most effectively to the issues raised in the last inspection in May 1997. It was awarded specialist status as a specialist college in mathematics and computing in July 2002 and it has been awarded a School Achievement Award. Standards are consistently very high. Teaching and learning are very good with a high proportion of very good and excellent teaching. The quality of education is very good. It has been broadened in response to pupil demand. There are extensive and excellent enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities. Whole school assessment practices, new reporting systems and academic tutoring are developing well across the school. Heads of departments and heads of year are accountable and are involved in strategic planning. With the senior management team they rigorously monitor and evaluate standards, teaching, learning, curriculum and the pastoral provision. Coherent school policies are consistently applied. A daily act of collective worship is still not in place, a statutory requirement. The accommodation has improved significantly, although aspects of it remain unsatisfactory. The school is actively involved in the wider community.

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*	B
A-levels/AS-levels	A*		A*	

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

In English, mathematics and science, and for all three subjects together, the school's results in the national tests for fourteen-year-olds in 2002 were very high. Standards have improved at a rate broadly in line with the national trend. When compared with similar schools, the results were very high. Pupils' current work reflects these results. Achievement in mathematics is excellent. Pupils are achieving well in relation to their above average earlier attainment. Results are consistently high. The school has one of the highest value added scores in the country demonstrating its outstanding success in ensuring that pupils make excellent progress.

The GCSE examination results in 2002 were very high and were well above the national average. Since the previous inspection the rate of improvement has been broadly in line with the national rising trend. When compared with similar schools, the school performance was well above average. The results in all subjects were better than national averages and were significantly better in the majority. From the work seen during the inspection, the school is at least maintaining these high standards and it is increasing the proportion of pupils who achieve the highest levels. The school exceeded its targets for 2001 and 2002.

The results of the A level examinations have improved significantly since the last inspection in 1997. In the majority of subjects many more students in 2001 gained the highest grades. Judgements are based upon 2001 data for which national comparisons can be made. From the work seen, in the subjects inspected, standards are very high in mathematics. Standards are well above average in art, English language and literature, biology, computing, economics, French, geography, physics and physical education. Standards are above average in chemistry. Standards are at expected levels in history and show improvement. The number of students taking music makes national comparisons inappropriate. Overall school results in 2002 indicate a significant upward trend. Pupils with special educational need, those with English as an additional language, and more able and gifted and talented pupils make similarly very good progress. Standards achieved at the end of Year 11 and the sixth form are very high.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils show great interest, commitment and work very hard. They enthusiastically undertake independent study and responsibility.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. The school is a very orderly community. Pupils are polite, courteous and show consideration for each other and adults.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils come from a wide diversity of cultural, ethnic and social backgrounds. They are extremely well integrated and value each other. Relationships are very good.
Attendance	Excellent. Attendance is high and well above the national average.

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.

Throughout the school, teaching and learning are consistently very good. This combined with pupils' positive attitudes, are significant reasons as to why pupils make such very good progress. Teachers have high expectations. Pupils respond very positively to the teachers' breadth of knowledge and understanding. In mathematics, rigorous and demanding teaching promotes critical thought and excellent attainment. Very good teaching overall is evident in English and the sciences. In the very best lessons teachers adopt varied and interesting methods to encourage thinking and consolidate pupils' understanding. In Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form, close attention to public examination requirements concentrates both teachers' and pupils' minds in a very positive way. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is very good. Pupils' information and communication technology skills are not being used in many subjects. Planning for pupils with special educational need is good, and they learn effectively. Gifted and talented pupils are suitably challenged. In the sixth form, teaching is very good, enabling students to develop good independent learning habits including research skills.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum is extensive. Excellent enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities challenge all. A very good range of A and AS subjects, which match students' aspirations is provided in the sixth form.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Good. The quality of support is very good. The use of assessment is systematic.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. Pupils enter the school with a good command of English. They benefit from teachers' careful attention to the development of their literacy skills.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Spiritual provision is good, personal, moral, social and cultural provision is very good. Pupils are involved in all aspects of school life. The school successfully celebrates pupils' cultural and ethnic diversity.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. Care and pupils' welfare are central elements of the strong pastoral system. The quality of care and support is strong.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher and senior management team are a strong and cohesive team and work well together. Their leadership and management are excellent. Management at all levels is very good.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is involved in strategic developments and demonstrates commitment. Statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not met.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The senior and middle managers and governors rigorously and effectively monitor and evaluate the performance of the school.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Efficient use is made of the school's existing resources. Cross-curricular use of information and communication technology is a recognised area for development.

The involvement of the sixth form in the main school is quite considerable. The school has excellent links with local schools and the wider community. Aspects of the accommodation are unsatisfactory.

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 school expects pupils to work hard and achieve their best. • Pupils make good progress at school. • The quality of teaching. • Behaviour is good. • The school helps boys to be mature and responsible. • Boys like school. • The school is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some would like the school to work more closely with parents. • Some would like to see the school setting the right amount of homework. • Some would like more information about pupils' progress. • Some would like a greater range of activities outside of lessons.

452 responses were received. Sixty-eight parents provided additional written returns. The great majority was very supportive of the school, its standards, and the quality of leadership, teaching and curriculum. The inspection team confirms the parents' positive views of the school. The school endeavours to work closely with parents; appropriate amounts of homework are set; the quality of information provided is very good. The range of activities provided outside of lessons is excellent.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form has 272 students on roll. It is larger than the national average for sixth forms. There was a slight decline in numbers between 1999 and 2001 from 240 to 236. Almost all students continue into the sixth form from the main school and on average a further 25 to 30 students join the sixth form from other schools each year. The proportion of students from ethnic minority backgrounds and for whom English is an additional language, reflects that in the main school. There are no students with special educational needs.

Attainment on entry is well above average. In 2001, entry requirements were a minimum of 5 A*-C grades. All students follow AS and A level courses. About 90 per cent of students move into further or higher education at the end of Year 13. About 9 per cent of students take a gap year before going on to further or higher education. Retention rates are very high and it is rare for any student to leave before the end of their courses.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

This is a very good sixth form that is cost effective. Teaching and learning are very good. Standards are rising and are high. Achievement is consistently high. A level results in 2001 were well above the national average. School A level results in 2002 show a rise in standards. An extensive range of courses meets the needs of students. Students are mature and determined to succeed. The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good.

Strengths

- The average number of A/AS level passes for pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A levels or AS equivalent is very high. Achievement in mathematics is excellent.
- Provision for mathematics and geography is excellent.
- Teaching is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge that they use extremely effectively to support students on the courses they are studying.
- Students are mature and confident and importantly make a very good contribution to the life of the main school. Relationships between older and younger boys are very strong.
- Retention rates are very high.
- There is very good guidance and advice for students based on good assessment of their progress and needs.

What could be improved

- The proportion of A grades at the end of Year 13.
- Access to information and communication technology in sixth-form teaching and study areas.
- Aspects of the accommodation.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

The table below shows overall judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses that were inspected in the sixth form. Judgements are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and

how well students achieve. Classical civilisation, German, Spanish, design and technology, general studies and media studies were not inspected.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Excellent. Attainment is very high. Teaching is very good in all its aspects leading to very good learning. Students have very positive attitudes.
Chemistry	Good. Good teaching and learning lead to above average standards. Students have very positive attitudes.
Biology	Very good. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Students are strongly motivated, as a result standards are well above national averages.
Physics	Very good. Standards are well above the national average. Teaching is very good and as a result students benefit from their teachers' expertise.
Business Business studies	Very good. Standards are consistently well above national expectations. There is a very good range of extra-curricular business activities. Teaching and learning are good.
Economics	Very good. Very good teaching and learning lead to high attainment. Very good, positive relationships between staff and students engender a strong partnership in learning.
Information and communication technology Computing	Very good. Good teaching and learning lead to above average attainment. Students have a very positive approach to the subject.
Hospitality, sports leisure and travel Physical education	Very good. Standards are high. Very good quality of highly organised, motivating teaching. Excellent quality and take-up of extra-curricular activities provision.
Visual & performing arts and media Art & Design	Very good. Teaching is very good. Teachers are well informed and are knowledgeable. Students are very articulate and express themselves well.
Music	Satisfactory. The commitment of teachers to improve the provision, and the very good relationships and quality of individual support are positive features. The limited time allocation and limited facilities are constraints to students' progress.
Humanities Geography	Excellent. Standards are well above average because of excellent teaching and learning. Relationships between pupils and staff are outstanding.
History	Very good. Very good teaching and learning. Independent learning is strong. Some excellent relationships.
English, languages and communication English	Very good. Very good examination results. Teachers know their subject very well and this leads to high achievement. Pupils have very good attitudes.
Modern languages French	Good. Standards are above average and are consistently good. Most teaching is good or very good. Relationships are good and students' attitudes are positive.

Students have insufficient access to computers. Students are learning very well and their progress is strongly supported by the quality of teaching.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very good quality support and guidance is given to students. Induction procedures are very good; systems for pastoral support are clear and well understood. Careers education and advice provided by the school is good and there is regular support from outside agencies. Assessment procedures including marking and feedback are very good; procedures to monitor students' progress are very good.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very good leadership provides clear direction for continued improvements. Daily management is very good with clear procedures for monitoring attendance and students' welfare; all students are effectively included in activities. Monitoring and evaluation are very good overall and the monitoring of achievement against national and similar school data is rigorous.

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 information about courses is clear and helpful. • Teachers provide help and support when it is needed. • They are taught well and challenged to do their best in most subjects. • The range of courses allows students to follow courses that are well matched to their talents and aspirations. • Teachers helped them to settle well. • They are helped to study independently. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some students feel that they are given insufficient advice about future options. • Some students feel that the school does not respond to their views. • Some feel they are not treated as adults • Some students feel they are given insufficient advice about careers.

Almost all of students in the sixth form responded to the questionnaire. It is important to note that some students would not have encountered the practices and procedures of the main school, having just joined the sixth form. Discussion between inspectors and a number of students, both formally and informally, indicates that students are very positive about the sixth form, the wide range of opportunities it offers them, and the guidance and support they receive. The strengths identified by students are well founded. The facilities for independent study are good, but information and communication technology is not accessible in the sixth form teaching areas or near the study area. Inspectors find that students are given very good advice on choice of courses in the sixth-form. Careers advice is offered and many students in the sixth form have had interviews with the Connexions careers advice service. Inspection evidence shows that views of the student council are listened to and that the school recognises students' increasing maturity in the way the sixth-form is organised and the responsibility students have.

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

Standards are very high and overall are well above the national average. The proportion of pupils obtaining 5 or more GCSE grades at A*-C and A*-G is consistently very high.

1. The GCSE examination results in 2002 were well above the national average. Since the previous inspection the rate of improvement has been broadly in line with the national rising trend. When compared with similar schools, the school performance was well above average. The results in all subjects were better than national averages and were significantly better in the majority. The school exceeded its targets for 2001 and 2002. Given the attainment on entry to the school, pupils are achieving well in relation to their above average earlier attainment. In English, mathematics and science, the school's results in the national tests for fourteen-year-olds in 2002 were very high. Pupils' current work reflects these results. Achievement in mathematics is excellent. Results are consistently high. The school has one of the highest value-added scores in the country, demonstrating its outstanding success in ensuring that pupils make excellent progress.
2. In lessons seen and in the work of the pupils, there were examples of well above average and high standards of attainment that reflect results in public examinations. Examples of well above average attainment were observed in most subjects including English, mathematics, science, design and technology, economics and physical education. In all lessons seen pupils' attainment was at least satisfactory or better. The school is successfully challenging pupils whatever their level of prior attainment. Pupils with special educational need, those with English as an additional language, and more able and gifted and talented pupils make similarly very good progress. Standards achieved at the end of Year 9, and 11 are very high.
3. Literacy and numeracy standards are well above average. The inspection evidence confirms that in English well above average standards are being maintained in Year 11. Pupils are articulate and they listen carefully, and reach well above average standards in writing. Pupils' reading and research skills are very good. In writing they consolidate their understanding; for example, in an excellent Year 10 English lesson about War poetry, pupils assembled a war collage to portray and interpret different phrases of a poem by Wilfred Owen and they sensitively presented this to the class. Critical language is used well to express views and opinions; pupils are confident speakers and enjoy role-play situations. Pupils work collaboratively together and, share ideas and planning before making presentations. These features were successfully demonstrated in a Year 7 English lesson, on the theme of 'Meet the author'. William Shakespeare was interviewed by a chat show host in the style of Graham Norton about: 'the lost years', the Globe and body snatchers. This was an excellent forum in which boys had researched relevant and historical facts and presented them in a humorous form. Charles Dickens, Lewis Carol, Arthur Conan Doyle and Tolkein were also interviewed. All performed in character and gave great insight into aspects of the authors' work and lives. They were also filmed and critically appraised by the audience against agreed criteria. Pupils make extensive notes, organise and present information clearly. In a Year 9 mathematics lesson about cumulative frequency graphs, boys calculated, illustrated and interpreted different concepts and methods. In a Year 11 information and communication lesson, pupils confidently presented their topic in pairs using technical terms. In a Year 11 chemistry

lesson, pupils collaborated effectively to plan different methods of making salts by investigating crystals of copper sulphate.

4. In mathematics, standards are high and achievement is very good. Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are very good, particularly in the use of algebra, which the department sees as fundamental to mathematical understanding. In an excellent Year 11 lesson on vectors, pupils consolidated learning through practical application. After reinforcement of the process by the teacher, boys used parking cones in the playground to depict midpoints. They measured up a huge quadrilateral shape and understood that they could use vectors to produce measurable results. Throughout the school, boys apply numerical and graphical skills in a number of subjects. They handle data and have a secure grasp of all aspects of numeracy.
5. In science, standards are well above average. Pupils demonstrate very good knowledge and understanding of scientific facts and ideas. In an excellent Year 8 lesson about tooth decay, boys used specific terms such as plaque, enamel, and incisors knowledgeably and explained the processes and prevention of tooth decay. Standards in most other subjects are above average. In art, pupils have a good knowledge of tone, line and colour. In a Year 7 lesson using such terms they discussed and compared the approaches to portraiture of different artists, such as Rembrandt, Van Gogh, Picasso and Giacometti. Musical standards are improving; pupils in Year 11 performed and recorded short compositional pieces playing a wide variety of musical instruments. They demonstrated a range of knowledge and performed in a variety of musical styles. In physical education, Year 9 pupils are improving their skills in cross-country running and swimming, and improving their co-ordination and body management. Pupils are aware of exercise and the effect it has on their body and the benefits of a healthy and active life style.

The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. The academic, sporting and creative progress of pupils is promoted most effectively.

6. The proportion of very good and better teaching has increased considerably since the previous inspection. Teaching and learning throughout the school is consistently very good and it is having a significant and positive effect on standards achieved. In Years 7 to 11 in over half of the lessons, teaching and learning are very good or better. In almost three quarters they are good or better and satisfactory in almost all of the remaining. Very good generic strengths in teaching are; teachers' knowledge and understanding, the teaching of basic skills; teachers' expectations, effectiveness of teaching methods, management of pupils, use of time and resources, the quality and use of ongoing assessment and use of homework. The level of challenge illustrates the high expectations, that teachers have of their pupils. These strengths lead to the pupils becoming highly motivated and showing considerable interest in their work. Particularly good examples were seen in English, biology, and in design and technology. Teachers' planning, although variable in quality, is never less than satisfactory. Excellent teaching occurs in English, mathematics and science. Across many subjects, teachers skilfully use a range of questioning techniques that encourage pupils to think through a problem and develop conceptual skills. Opportunities in lessons for active participation are sometimes missed. The good teaching is based on very good relationships between the teachers and pupils.
7. Very good generic strengths in learning are; the development of pupils' understanding, pupils' knowledge and skills, the development of ideas and very good progress in learning. Pupils are well motivated, work hard, are interested, concentrate and work well

independently. Particularly good examples of research and analytical skills being well developed were seen in economics and in information and communication technology in Years 10 and 11. In discussions with pupils they are very clear about how well they are achieving and what they need to do to improve the quality of their work. Several older pupils said they found individual targeting helpful. Pupils are adept at using information and communication technology but opportunities to do so across the curriculum are infrequent and currently limited. Since the last inspection, teaching, which was a strength of the school, is even better.

The curriculum is wide ranging with an excellent and extensive range of enrichment and extra-curricular opportunities. The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

8. The school aims to provide the highest quality of education for all its pupils. It provides a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum appropriate to the ability profile of its pupils. Very good opportunities are in place to consolidate and extend learning. Provision for pupils with special educational need, those with English as an additional language and gifted and talented pupils is very good. The mathematics department fosters its ablest pupils by well-planned extension work and challenging courses. Overall, the curriculum meets requirements and significantly more beside. In Years 7 to 9, all subjects of the National Curriculum, together with religious education, are taught. Information and communication technology is taught as a discrete subject. Additionally, Latin and single sciences are offered. The curriculum successfully meets the requirements of the Key Stage 3 strategy for literacy and numeracy. Both science and information and communication technology have been launched and the school is now focusing on the foundation strand in geography, German, and history, which are this year's focus subjects for the strategy. Citizenship is taught as part of the personal, and social education programme.
9. In Years 10 and 11, curricular provision is very good. All pupils study a very broad, balanced and relevant curriculum which includes English literature and language, mathematics, three separate sciences or a double award science course, art and design, business studies, economics, design and technology, information and communication in addition to computer studies, technology, media studies, music, Latin, Ancient Greek, three modern foreign languages, and a short religious education course, at GCSE. All follow a general course in physical education and all boys are taught to swim. A well-structured personal, social education programme, and which includes careers, health and sex education, and education for citizenship is in place. The school has a pupil-centred approach to options and the option pattern is fitted to pupils' choices. Continuity of teaching is a prominent feature and split teaching of classes is allowed in Year 7 to 11 only in very exceptional circumstances. In Year 11, following GCSE examinations, all boys have the opportunity of work experience. Currently drama is not offered other than that covered by the English curriculum. School productions, however, maintain a high profile. The curriculum is planned effectively in most subjects and provides continuity and progression. It is constantly under review. The school is very receptive to pupils' views, resulting in, for example, the introduction of media studies.
10. The range of extra-curricular provision and enrichment is extensive. Excellent opportunities are provided for pupils' intellectual, cultural, sporting and social development. Parents and pupils commented on the huge commitment and involvement of staff and how very much they appreciated this. The level of participation by all groups including ethnic minorities is very high. There are many opportunities for pupils to take

part in dramatic productions and musical events. Sporting activities are very well represented and the standards achieved are high at local, regional, and national levels. The Combined Cadet Force, World Challenge Expeditions, United Nations event and community service offer further opportunities for development. A wide range of educational visits including foreign travel enhances the curriculum; in recent years students have visited Cuba, the Grand Canyon, Italy and Russia. Also all Year 7 pupils take part in an Outdoor activity week at the school's field centre in the Brecon Beacons.

11. The boys play an active role in the very good local community links. These have been strengthened with the specialist mathematics and computing status. The school has well-developed links with local schools and provides outreach specialist teaching in mathematics, often with boys as teaching assistants. Careers education and guidance is good with contributions from outside speakers, often specialists in their field. The school also has very good links with institutions such as universities and colleges to enhance the learning opportunities of its pupils. All these activities contribute considerably to the all-round development of pupils and extends their learning experiences.
12. The overall provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. The school's multi-ethnic and culturally diverse community is recognised and valued. Pupils listened attentively to the act of collective worship led by boys about the diversity and variety of life. Boys shared prepared extracts from sacred scriptures and related these to the contemporary views and experiences of young people. Although not formally planned for, opportunities were observed for raising and developing pupils' spirituality in art, through discussion about different artistic interpretations, in literature, through reading war poetry, and in music whilst exploring world music. Provision for pupils' moral development is very good; teachers are good role models. Pupils clearly understand right from wrong. There is a strong commitment to equal opportunities and developing respect and concern for others. There are numerous opportunities for pupils' social development. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility and to show initiative. Pupils are very well integrated and relationships that exist between pupils of different ethnic groups are very good. Pupils' cultural experience is broadened by foreign travel and educational visits.

Leadership and management by the headteacher and senior management team are excellent. Monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance leading to effective action are excellent.

13. The school has made excellent progress since it was last inspected. The very clear direction given to the school by the headteacher and senior management, with the support of the governing body, has resulted in a culture of improvement. At the centre of improvement is the school's continuing focus on raising standards, improving the quality of teaching, learning, curriculum and the environment. Staff share this commitment and they work hard to improve provision.
14. The management structure has undergone changes to accommodate the changing circumstances and needs of the school. A very experienced deputy and two assistant headteachers ably support the headteacher. This group is a very strong and cohesive management team with a sense of shared purpose. This is a school that constantly strives to improve and develop. Changes have been effective, standards continue to improve, and the headteacher and senior managers are clear in their resolve to ensure a greater number of the very highest grades at A level. Curriculum provision is wide-ranging to

encompass not only the needs of pupils and beyond, but also their aspirations. The school has been awarded specialist status and an achievement award. The rigour with which improvements have been identified and addressed is highly commendable. Action has been taken to support and, where necessary, remove weak teachers and improve the performance of others. The effect of this is seen in the latest school results at A level particularly. All senior managers and those in posts of responsibility have clear roles and responsibilities, focused on identifying priorities for school development, such as information and communication technology and accommodation improvements throughout the school.

15. Staff are clear about priorities and work well together. The needs, interests and achievements of pupils are central to the school's strategic development. The delegation of responsibilities is well led and managed and the line management structure provides an effective communication system. Subjects are well managed and heads of department provide good professional leadership. Management structures have been revised and improved to allow for greater accountability and openness and this has strengthened the school. For example, regular monitoring and subject reviews take place to support the monitoring undertaken by senior management and external consultants. The rigorous monitoring by the headteacher and senior managers has enabled areas of weakness to be identified, and priorities for action taken. The use of performance and examination data linked with individual target setting and departmental reviews has been instrumental in improving performance. Staff development is given a high priority. There are clear and highly effective induction programmes for newly qualified teachers and those new to the school.
16. Governors have played an important role in the improvements seen. They are informed and involved in strategic planning and school development. Individual governors have a high level of expertise, which they use to support the school. Some governors are actively involved in the school and visit regularly, others less so. Governors' financial monitoring is very strong and very significant improvements in the financial circumstances of the school have been effected in the last three years. Financial planning is secure and supports the school's priorities for improvement. The day-to-day administration is effective and efficient and communication is clear. Non-teaching staff are highly valued and aid the smooth running of the school. The school is well placed to secure the improvements that it is seeking.

The school promotes very good standards of behaviour. Attendance is high. As a result personal development and relationships are very good. The focus on pupils' welfare is a central element of the strong pastoral system.

17. The school aims to achieve the highest standards of effort, behaviour and commitment from pupils. The learning environment and work ethic is focused and purposeful. Effective behaviour management systems are in place. The attitudes of pupils exhibited in all sections of the school, as well as in the wider aspects of school life, are very good. They are courteous, orderly and show concern for each other and for each other's cultural and religious backgrounds.
18. Attendance is monitored thoroughly. Lessons start promptly. The scrutiny and analysis of attendance data is excellent. Accurate, comprehensive data is readily accessible and serves as a useful tool for management both in tracking the attendance of pupils and in alerting them promptly to any unusual absences.

19. Personal development and relationships are very good. The personal, social and education programme underpins the school's work successfully. The school has invested heavily in pastoral staffing and management and the strong pastoral system supports pupils' welfare well. The school has good links with the usual external agencies. The year head team is a strong group of middle managers and, with the tutors, plays an important role in supporting and monitoring pupils' personal and academic development. The school has recently appointed a school counsellor. Lower sixth mentors also provide peer group support. The pupil progress monitoring systems effectively link academic and pastoral monitoring. The leadership of the school works very hard to raise the achievement of all pupils and to ensure that every pupil is included in the school. Pupils willingly take responsibility, for example, as prefects, or in organising debates, activities and school events and supporting staff on educational visits. Pupils are involved in charitable activities to raise funds, for example, in the Multiple Sclerosis Challenge and the Year 7 bazaar.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

The use of and access to information and communication technology across the curriculum.

26. Pupils have insufficient opportunities to apply their information and communication technology skills in subjects other than information and communication technology. Access to information and communication technology is restricted in some curriculum areas. A lack of direct access results in some teachers missing opportunities to provide planned opportunities where appropriate.

Aspects of the accommodation are unsatisfactory.

27. Accommodation is sufficient and it meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. However, aspects of it are unsatisfactory and it affects teaching and learning in other subject areas. Accommodation for mathematics is scattered across the school including temporary buildings in which there is a lack of sufficient heating and in which rain causes leaks. The relatively small gymnasium restricts the range of teaching and learning. Accommodation for music suffers from imperfectly sound-dampened structures and rooms are stuffy. Ventilation in the information and communication technology area and in music is unsatisfactory. There is insufficient storage throughout the school and particularly in the art and design areas with inadequate facilities for modern technology. A few classrooms are in need of redecoration. In a few classrooms display is good but generally this is an area for further improvement. Disabled access is poor; all new buildings allow access but little can be done to develop access further in older buildings.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

28. To raise standards and build on the good progress made in recent years, the school should:

- (1) Improve the use of and access to information and communication technology across the curriculum by:
 - ensuring that, where appropriate, the requirements for the planned use of information and communication technology in subject areas are met, and access to information and communication technology in all subjects is improved. (paragraph 26).
- (2) Address the unsatisfactory aspects of the accommodation mentioned above by:
 - building on and implementing the planned improvements for the accommodation. (paragraph 27).

Minor Weakness

Ensure that all teaching and support staff are fully aware of the sound school policy for Child Protection and through training update their knowledge and understanding of Child Protection procedures.

Sixth form

1. Increase the proportion of students achieving A grades at A/AS level by:
 - consolidating the very good teaching and improved standards that have resulted in the school's 2002 A/AS level results. (paragraphs 29, 30, 31, 32, 39).
2. Broaden the curriculum by;
 - ensuring that the requirements for information and communication technology are met in all subject areas and increasing the provision for and access to computers for sixth form students.
(paragraphs 82, 85, 92, 100, 104, 122, 128, 134, 142, 158).
3. Improve aspects of the accommodation by:
 - building on and implementing the plans and improvements for the accommodation (paragraphs 74, 75, 76, 82, 115, 122, 131, 136).

These shortcomings are recognised by the school and plans are in hand to eliminate them subject to forthcoming funding. The school has just been successful in its bid for capital funding to address many of the accommodation needs.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7-11	37
	Sixth form	52
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		48

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Years 7-11							
Number	6	15	7	8	1	0	0
Percentage	17	41	18	22	2	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	7	17	23	5	0	0	0
Percentage	14	33	44	10	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	636	272
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	6	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	1	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	4	1

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	281

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	37
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	3.1
National comparative data	7.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	1.2

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2002	123	n/a	123

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	122	123	123
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	122	123	123
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	99 (99)	100 (100)	100 (99)
	National	66 (64)	67 (66)	66 (66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	98 (91)	100 (100)	100 (99)
	National	32 (31)	45 (45)	33(34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	123	123	123
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	123	123	123
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	67 (65)	70 (68)	67 (64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	100 (99)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	32 (31)	44 (42)	34 (33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	122	n/a	122

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	122	122	122
	Girls	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Total	122	122	122
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	100 (96)	100 (98)	100 (98)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score Per pupil	School	67.6
	National	39.8

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All	Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	119	n/a	119	n/a	n/a	n/a
	Average point score per candidate	30	n/a	30	n/a	n/a	n/a
National	Average point score per candidate	16.9	n/a	16.9	n/a	n/a	n/a

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

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	504	20	1
White – Irish	3	0	0
White – any other White background	65	3	1
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	8	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	4	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	28	1	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	26	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	118	2	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	22	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	8	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	38	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	19	1	0
Black or Black British – African	28	5	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	21	0	0
Any other ethnic group	6	1	0
No ethnic group recorded	9	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	44
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	17.43

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	220.5

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.9
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y13

Key Stage 3	27.9
Key Stage 4	22.9
Sixth form	14.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/02
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	£
Total income	2883054
Total expenditure	2883949
Expenditure per pupil	3334
Balance brought forward from previous year	2203
Balance carried forward to next year	7054

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	22.15
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	25.26

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
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	896
Number of questionnaires returned	452

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	51	42	6	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	55	40	4	1	1
Behaviour in the school is good.	45	48	3	1	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	34	51	11	2	2
The teaching is good.	44	50	3	1	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	35	51	11	2	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	48	41	7	2	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	80	19	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	27	51	15	3	4
The school is well led and managed.	42	47	3	1	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	49	45	4	1	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	45	38	9	2	6

Other issues raised by parents

452 responses were received. 68 written provided additional written returns. The great majority were very supportive of the school, its standards, quality of leadership, teaching and curriculum offered. A few parents expressed concerns about behaviour that they considered to be deteriorating and particularly the use of class detentions as a punishment. A few parents expressed concerns about the arrangements for parent evenings. A few had concerns about the amount of homework. A few wanted to see improvements in communications between the school and parents generally.

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

29. The average A/AS level passes for pupils entered for 2 or more GCE A levels or AS equivalent is very high. The school's performance overall in the A level examinations in 2001 for those students entered for two or more subjects was very high in comparison to the national average. At Wilson's, 64.1 per cent of boys achieved the highest grades. When comparing the average points score per students entered for GCE A/AS level examination students at Wilson's achieved an average points score of 30.0 per cent in comparison to national figures of 16.9 per cent per student in 2001. In the majority of subjects many more students in 2001 gained the highest grades. Wilson's is part of a group of the 20 highest performing boys' grammar schools that shares results annually. The school finds this a useful benchmark to judge achievement. In the AS examinations taken at the end of Year 12 in 2001, nearly all students gained grades A-E, with a high proportion attaining the highest grades.
30. The school's results are consistently very high and have improved significantly since the last inspection in 1997 when results were also well above the national average. Year on year there has been a significant rise in the proportion of students gaining the highest grades. The results indicate that the students are making at least very good progress and the majority are achieving appropriately and often better in relation to their earlier performance in GCSE examinations and in relation to the challenging targets set for them.
31. The A level point score has risen from 24.2 to 30.9 over the period since the last inspection. In 2001 almost all students gained A to E grades in their chosen subjects. The very few exceptions were in general studies, chemistry, and economics and these related to very few students. All students gained A to E grades in English literature and language, art and design, biology, business studies, classical studies, computing, design and technology, economics, French, geography, German, history, mathematics, music, physical education and physics. The introduction of English language has significantly increased the take-up of English at A level and the first results have been very strong. Results in mathematics and geography are well above results for other subjects. Low numbers of entrants for art and design, and physical education, mean that statistical comparison with national results are not appropriate.
32. In 2002, there was a very steep trend of improvement in a number of subjects when compared to the previous year's school results. Also, the proportion of students gaining the highest grades increased. Results were very high in the majority of subjects. Although, currently there is no national comparative data available, results in geography, physics and history have improved significantly.
33. Judgements are based upon 2001 data for which national comparisons can be made. In lessons seen, students were attaining above course requirements in almost all subjects observed. From the work seen during the inspection, students are attaining above average standards overall and many are attaining very high standards in a number of subjects. In mathematics, standards are excellent and are very high in comparison with the national average. Standards are also very high in physical education in examinations, activities and in coursework overall. Standards are currently well above average in biology, physics,

business studies, economics, art and design, French, information and communication technology, geography, history, and in English. Standards are above average in chemistry. Although recent changes in staffing and limitations of resourcing have had an effect on the attainment of students in music, rapid progress is being made in consolidating students' achievement. Spanish, German, Media Studies, Classical civilisation and design technology were not inspected; the most recent analysis of examination data for Classical civilisation and design and technology subjects suggests well above average levels of achievement.

34. A significant number of students join the school for the sixth form. They are successfully and quickly integrated. Students have well-developed research skills and they demonstrate good critical analysis and problem-solving skills. They show a secure ability to apply concepts and their previous knowledge, skills and understanding to new situations. Overall, attitudes to learning are very good and there is evidence that substantial progress is made over time reflecting the high expectations, challenge and thoroughness of teaching. When given the opportunity, students are adept at applying their information and communication and modern technology skills. Communication skills are well advanced. Students are articulate, confident and assured. Students listen carefully, note-take and summarise given information. They are well organised and demonstrate a well-established work ethic.
35. Retention rates are high. Rarely do students withdraw from their courses during the sixth form. Eighty-nine per cent continue on to higher education at the end of Year 13. Approximately nine per cent of students take a gap year. The vast majority of students are successful in securing their first choice of University. Approximately ten per cent of students are regularly accepted at Oxbridge.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

36. Students are enthusiastic learners; mature and well focused, they are at ease discussing their work, their aspirations and the school's role in their development. The majority responded thoughtfully and positively to the pre-inspection questionnaire, acknowledging the high teaching standards, the comprehensive curriculum and the wide range of activities available to them. Inspectors found the minority view that there was a lack of advice regarding careers and study options was not substantiated. Self-reliance is fostered through the school's extensive range of sporting and extra-curricular activities, and visits overseas reinforce this very good provision.
37. Students' very good attitudes to their learning and their positive response to the school's personal development provision instil very good values and favourably reflect the commitment and effort the school has made in this area.
38. Attendance is excellent, and above the national average with no unauthorised absence. The registers and registration procedures are thorough and meet statutory requirements. Fixed-term exclusions during the previous term were minimal. They were properly documented and wholly justified in the interests of the remainder of the pupils. There was one permanent exclusion for the corresponding period.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

39. Teaching overall in the sixth form is very good and it is having a significant and positive effect on standards achieved. Almost half of the teaching is very good or better and in almost one in twelve lessons teaching is excellent. It is rarely less than good.
40. Teachers have a very secure knowledge and understanding of their subjects and of the requirements of the examinations. Students benefit from the teachers' genuine expertise and enthusiasm and as a result they become equally interested in what they are learning. Teachers have high expectations of what students can achieve. In an excellent Year 12 pure mathematics lesson, the search for a quicker and more elegant method for solving a trigonometric equation, using a previously learnt identity, led to students gaining a much broader and more incisive understanding of the topic. Similarly in an excellent Year 12 geography lesson, on the study of population policies with reference to China, the teacher's enthusiasm and excellent subject knowledge really stimulated the students. They were all most eager to learn and used the department's Intranet and researched information for further discussion. In business studies, teachers are very enthusiastic and this is readily shared with the students. In an excellent Year 12 physical education lesson, students were directed to contemporary issues of prejudice and discrimination and through the teacher's wide knowledge and skilled use of questioning they were enabled to have greater insight and understanding of cross-cultural issues. In an excellent Year 12 art and design lesson, the teacher discussed at length with students similar and different approaches by influential artists to depicting the environment. As a result a lively discussion followed with students expressing their views on works by Velasquez, Cézanne and Van Gogh.
41. Some teachers use a wide range of interesting methods to stimulate students' learning. In French, students are encouraged to use the target language in active situations such as games, role-play and presentations. In economics, student participation is promoted through a range of extra-curricular activities such as involvement in writing competitions and banking games. Clear explanations by the teacher help to develop the students' understanding of what is required. Lesson objectives are effectively shared with students so that they can assess their own progress. In information and communication technology, the planning of lessons is thorough with supportive revision booklets effectively assisting students' progress and understanding. In geography, the use of study skills handbooks has significantly supported students. In a very good Year 13 geography lesson, students were encouraged to research case studies on 'Foreign overseas aid'. Usually lessons are carefully planned and structured to meet the needs and aspirations of all students. In a Year 13 art and design lesson the teacher skilfully challenged the students introducing new concepts and stimulating their imaginative curiosity for post-impressionism. However, in chemistry insufficient methods are planned for the full range of attainment, so that weaker students are not always supported well enough to ensure full understanding. In mathematics, not all students participate actively and, whilst they absorb and acquire knowledge, they do not always deepen their learning through active participation. The very skilled and often probing questioning in most lessons confirms and extends learning.
42. In the best practice, for example, in some English lessons, students' work is assessed promptly, with detailed written comments that evaluate achievement constructively against specific examination criteria. Teachers monitor students' progress carefully.

43. In many subjects little use is made of information and communication technology in lessons to support students' learning and achievement. Lack of access restricts the potential use in some subjects. In art and design, there are missed opportunities to use modern technology. In music, students are unsure of the exact requirements and standards of the A level examination. Progress is also affected by the relatively small time allocation given to the subject. In geography, there is little reference to texts in lessons as a source of research and information.
44. Students have a very good attitude towards the school that is positively reflected in their academic and personal development. The teachers encourage their students to stretch themselves both physically and mentally to fulfil their potential. Students appreciate this challenging atmosphere and the close relationships with their teachers that are key features of the sixth form. They are aware of, and appreciate, the privilege of the excellent education the school provides and respect the school's emphasis on self-discipline that enables them to develop a strong sense of personal and social responsibility. They are enthusiastic learners with excellent learning skills. In tandem with their own development and progress, these characteristics are an important resource to the school in the guidance of its younger members in their early years and remain an important feature in upholding the character of the school.
45. The school's ethos is characterised by a determination to sustain its outstanding academic record and reputation. Learning is a core value and the very good levels of concentration noted in the classroom, together with a very high level of effective independent work, suggest that this emphasis will continue to maintain this position. Students work very hard, are keen to do well and join fully in school life. Formal and informal discussions with them showed that they valued the approachability of their teachers, the curricular and extra-curricular opportunities and the school's tradition of academic excellence.
46. Students usually work well in intellectually challenging and often well-paced lessons. During the inspection a few lessons, for example in chemistry, English and French were very much teacher led and teaching methods lacked variety. On these occasions students find it hard to maintain concentration and opportunities for active learning are missed or marginalised. Students welcome the individual support they are given to develop their studies. They are eager to learn, are studious, concentrate well and are supportive of one another, and work with great purpose.

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

47. The school's sixth form curriculum has been adroitly planned to cater for the needs of its particular intake of students. Accordingly there is a very strong academic provision but with no vocational courses. The school offers students an excellent choice from twenty-four GCE Advanced level subjects. The curriculum includes compulsory General Studies and a games afternoon, which is optional in Year 13. The bulk of GCE A level teaching takes place in the morning when the school feels students are likely to be more alert. Some smaller groups are preserved wherever possible to maintain the extensive curriculum on offer. As they enter Year 12, students can opt for any four GCE AS level subjects, alongside general studies, and the timetable is then skilfully constructed to meet their requirements as far as possible. In Year 13 the majority of students drop from four to three options on the GCE A level course.

48. The school's very flourishing sixth form is, in part, due to the careful advice and guidance through tutorials, open evening and interviews before students start, to ensure they pursue suitable courses. In the sixth form itself a significant amount of time is allocated for tutorials within the timetable and this continues the effective contribution to students' personal development on a regular basis. As additional features, students can opt for Community Service and or participate in the Combined Cadet Force. This includes, on the one hand, contributing as teaching assistants and as football coaches in local primary schools and, on the other, developing teamwork and leadership skills.
49. It is a testament to the outstanding GCE A level provision that a very high percentage of students subsequently move on to higher education establishments. Nearly all students achieve their first choice of university. A significant proportion of those wishing to go to Oxford or Cambridge are also successful. There are well-developed and effective higher education preparation systems in the school. For example, procedures for writing UCAS references have been reviewed and improvements are in place to ensure that the school provides accurate and helpful information. There are useful links with higher education institutions such as the regional mathematics circle run in conjunction with Royal Holloway College.
50. The very high standard of students' prior attainment across all subjects when they enter the sixth form negates any need to provide GCSE retake classes in Year 12. Students' exceptional success in GCE A level examinations indicates that teachers build very effectively on students' earlier GCSE success, taking full account of their potential. The recent introduction of target-setting within the tutoring system, regular supervision of private study and structured independent study tasks in Year 12 are all contributing to raising students' achievement.
51. The school's commitment to providing a broad educational programme is evident in the excellent opportunities for enrichment through extra-curricular activities. These are of many different kinds. Students participate in various sporting activities to a very high level with national success in water polo and badminton, and regional success in football and athletics. The 'Tough Guy' endurance competition and Snowdonia Challenge not only test and improve students' personal physical attributes but also make significant contributions to charitable causes. Sixth formers participate strongly in drama and music activities. The school's theatre company presents an annual production and the school choir benefits from the involvement of both students and staff.
52. The provision for students' personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision is very good overall. As in the main school, legal requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not met. There is no school policy or co-ordinated approach to the promotion of spiritual development. Opportunities do arise to address spiritual issues within the formal framework of weekly assemblies. These are broadly Christian in nature, though planned in an inclusive way.
53. Concepts of belief in God, faith and revelation are dealt with specifically in general studies. A subject specialist teaches one module of work on religion. Informally, opportunities for discussion of spiritual matters arise in English, science and physical education. However, this is dependent on individual teachers and some opportunities to explore fundamental issues are lost. Good examples were seen in English literature courses, with discussion of Philip Larkin's response to the church in his poem ' Church Going' by Year 12 students,

and reflection on themes of nature, art and religion in the context of the 1990 Gulf War in Tony Harrison's poem *'Initial Illumination'* by Year 13 students.

54. Provision for students' moral development is very good. Teachers act as good role models. There is a strong commitment to equal opportunities and to developing respect and concern for others. In a physical education lesson students discussed the effect of prejudice and discrimination. The sixth form council represents the sixth form opinions. As part of community service, students are involved in helping in old people's homes, youth projects and special schools. The Charity Committee supports, amongst other things, the work of the Croydon and Sutton MS Therapy Centre and the education of Kenyan children orphaned by the Aids epidemic.
55. Numerous opportunities are provided for students' social development. Provision is very good. Students are encouraged to take responsibility and to show initiative. The number and range of excellent extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities are appreciated and valued. A very wide range of sports is offered and students are successful at county, regional and national levels.
56. The school's multi-cultural and ethnically diverse community is recognised and valued. Students are very well integrated and relationships that exist between different ethnic groups are very good. Levels of take-up of optional activity are strong amongst ethnic minorities. Extensive cultural trips are offered, for example, to Cuba, Russia, Italy, Spain and the Grand Canyon. Foreign exchanges with France and Germany take place. Educational visits to museums and the theatre broaden students' cultural experience. The annual drama production is a highlight of the school year. There is a school choir and there are opportunities for students to take part in ensembles. The school is an outward looking school and it endeavours to involve the community. Students have made valuable contributions to local primary schools as teaching assistants and as football coaches. These activities have increased with the specialist college partnership.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

57. Assessment has been a focus for development. Academic tutoring linked to target-setting is now central and is part of the monitoring process. Ambitious targets are set for students based on their prior performance at GCSE. The strong-target setting is supported by excellent assessment data management and tracking of students' progress and diligence. The school has also recently introduced supervised study for Year 12 because of concerns about the amount of time given by students to paid work. This was identified as a major cause for concern regarding students' independent learning and the negative effect this had on their studies. Departments are developing individual methods to maximise this and the school has evidence to suggest that on the whole this has been successful in making a difference to standards achieved.

Advice, support and guidance

58. There are very good procedures for supporting students that provide a high level of pastoral care. The school has a sound understanding of students' educational, developmental and emotional needs and uses this detailed knowledge very effectively and inclusively to achieve the best possible outcome for them. There is an ethos of mutual trust that allows sixth form students to mature and learn effectively as they approach the end of their school life. The school has a commitment to ethnic and social inclusion that

was clearly in evidence during the inspection, both in the classroom and in the communal areas.

59. The Health and Safety policy of the school is sound. The site manager carries out regular safety checks throughout the school. The general appearance of the school grounds and the exterior of the school is commendable and reflects well on the care and commitment of the school's gardener. Internally the school is mostly shabby and in need of renovation and redecoration. The school recognises this and has recently employed a painter and decorator to undertake a programme of refurbishment. The tendency of students to drop litter, which was noted at the last inspection, persists. There is a quarterly inspection of fire equipment certified by the designated company. First Aid provision is very good with sufficient personnel trained to the nationally recognised standard. Adequate and appropriate medical supplies are held in the First Aid room to deal with routine minor matters and the procedure for obtaining further assistance and informing next-of-kin is well understood.
60. The school monitors attendance thoroughly. Registers are correctly completed and registration procedures are sound. Lessons start promptly. The scrutiny and analysis of attendance data are excellent. Accurate, comprehensive data is readily accessible and serves as a useful tool for management in both tracking the attendance of students and alerting them promptly to any unusual absences.
61. The school maintains a safe environment, free from bullying and other oppressive behaviour. Its induction process for pupils arriving from primary schools is commendable and highly effective in easing the difficult early days for new entrants. A general courteousness by the majority of students was noted during the inspection and drew favourable comment from inspection team members.

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

62. Parents' views of the school are very good. The parents' meeting and their response to the questionnaires show a high level of satisfaction with the school and the excellent education it provides for their children. Many consider that the school, already acknowledged as very good, has improved significantly since the last inspection with higher expectations and better teaching leading to even higher examination grades. A small number of parents expressed concern about piecemeal communication but most felt well informed about their children's progress and were comfortable about approaching teachers in matters of concern. The main school is oversubscribed and the increase in student numbers in the sixth form is testament to its very high standing in the community
63. Parents receive a good quality, well-presented prospectus, with ancillary documents, prior to their children joining the school. This comprehensive package fully meets statutory requirements. The annual report of the Governing Body is also very informative, fully meeting statutory requirements yet easily understood, being written with the reader in mind. A detailed informative and entertaining newsletter is regularly published supplemented, if necessary, with letters from the headteacher, on specific matters of a more urgent nature, which are sent by post. This wide range of information ensures that parents are informed of the full school programme of events and are aware of wider issues that affect the school.

64. There is a very good partnership between the school and parents. Inspection findings show that the high regard in which they hold the school is fully justified. Its partnerships with other schools, businesses and institutions provides pupils with further opportunities to broaden their experience and education and equips them well for life in the wider community. The school has a well-supported Parents Association that works very hard to raise funds for the school. Additionally, parents support the school through covenanted donations that provide a substantial annual sum to assist the school in maintaining the high standards that parents have come to expect. They know that the school has the best interests of their children at heart and most instinctively trust the professional judgement of the headteacher in matters of the school's educational strategy.
65. Overall the strong partnership with parents contributes significantly to the learning and social development of the school's children and helps the students to achieve their best. The senior management team, together with the governing body, are keen to develop and strengthen relationships with parents and the wider community and address as a priority any matters of concern identified by the inspection.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

66. The sixth form is very well led and managed. The headteacher, senior managers and the head of sixth form work with great commitment and cohesion to ensure best provision. The effectiveness of leadership is shown by the well above average standards achieved by students. Students achieve very well because leadership ensures that the quality of teaching is very good. Overall, sixth formers and parents have confidence in what the school provides for them and numbers of students have increased since the last inspection.
67. The governing body is well organised and proud of the sixth form and its pupils. Governors are well informed and take an interest in the sixth form. Governors know the school well and some speak very knowledgeably about sixth form activities. However, they have not ensured that a daily act of collective worship is held for all pupils in the sixth form.
68. The headteacher and senior management team monitors the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of individual subjects and departments closely. Where performance has not met the high expectations of the school, the headteacher and senior staff have taken action to improve the situation. For example, there are methods in place to raise pupils' B grades to A, although it is too soon for management to measure the effect. Heads of department also evaluate how successful they are in meeting specific targets for their subjects. They, and subject specialists also take responsibility for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning.
69. The school development plan includes specific objectives that ensure a clear direction for the work of the sixth form. For example, ways of measuring value added have recently been revised so that the school has a very clear view of the achievements of students. As a result, the school sets appropriately challenging targets for individual students and subjects in examinations. The management is committed to the principles of inclusive education. The sixth form reflects this commitment by offering courses that meet students' needs and ensuring that students achieve very well.

70. The school has developed a very good policy and comprehensive procedures for the appraisal and performance management. Each department's examination performance is carefully monitored and new systems introduced to improve performance where necessary. The senior management team receives departmental minutes and these are followed up appropriately. Staff development procedures are thorough and very well organised. Priorities are established by regular reference to school and departmental plans. The majority of sixth form staff has received training for the new A level courses. A comprehensive record of all training undertaken is maintained.
71. There is a very good match of sixth form teachers, who are all well qualified in the subject that they teach. There is a very good range of support staff including an excellent librarian, and science, design and technology and information and communication technology staff. The school shares two modern language assistants with a neighbouring school.
72. The school makes very good use of the resources available. There is a new sixth form centre with tutorial and private study facilities for all students. Students have ready access to information and communication technology resources in the library and the information and communication technology suite. However, there is a shortage of access to information and communication technology equipment, books, magazines and newspapers for private study and independent research for students in the sixth form study area.
73. Accommodation is sufficient. Overall, it provides sound support to teaching and learning. Some areas are in need of attention. Since the last report in 1997, the sixth form centre has opened and is now in regular use. It is a purpose-built area of classrooms, and study areas. Its spacious, well-furnished common room is in addition to the sixth form common room in the main building. The centre is well maintained with a welcoming and purposeful atmosphere. Valued highly by students, it very strongly supports the school's stated resource aims. Classes are taught in the new sixth form centre, with students continuing to use specialist accommodation in the rest of the school.
74. One geography room is too small to facilitate effective group work. The history room, with bare plaster and a need for decoration, is not the most welcoming. The sixth form centre does not have computers for students' use. They use those in the library. Teaching in modern foreign languages is made harder because teachers have to carry in all resource materials. In the main school, laboratories strongly support study. The well-stocked library is a very good key area. It supports sixth formers' use of books and other resources for individual work. Its range of word-processors is generally available and in good order to assist research using the Internet. Accommodation for mathematics is scattered through a range of temporary buildings, making it harder to co-ordinate learning in this subject. There is a lack of sufficient heating and rain causes leaks.
75. Accommodation for music suffers from imperfectly sound-dampened structures and it is not well ventilated. It allows sound transfer to neighbouring spaces. It interferes with teaching and learning in other subject areas. Ventilation in the rooms used for information and communication technology is unsatisfactory. This makes it difficult for participants to overcome heat and potential drowsiness. Accommodation for physical education and sports includes a very good swimming pool and an excellent range of fields and courts. The all-weather surface areas allow a large range of activities at almost all times. The relatively small gymnasium restricts the range of teaching and learning. By very careful

planning teachers provide the full range of activities required. There are no health and safety issues noted concerning the accommodation.

76. The previous inspection report outlined no key issues for accommodation. It did refer to the need for better display, particularly in mathematics and modern foreign languages. In a few classrooms, display is good but generally this is an area for further improvement. Significant improvements have been made since the last inspection; however, there are matters requiring attention.
77. The budget is maintained and managed effectively and carefully monitored against best value principles. There are clear links to the school development plan with priorities annually linked to funding arrangements.
78. Procedures for financial management and control are secure and efficient. An extremely efficient finance manager under direction of the headteacher administers the school's budget carefully. Governors exercise responsible oversight of its income and expenditure through the finance committee. The school's budget reflects its educational priorities and its careful stewardship. The governing body ensures that funds are properly used for their intended purpose and the principles of value for money are rigorously applied. Overall, the procedures for financial management are very good with appropriate safeguards in place. The sixth form is cost effective as it provides a very good education for its pupils without depleting the main school funds. The income generated for the sixth form matches expenditure. The school monitors all spending closely and ensures that specific grants are used for the purpose intended.

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 [latest year for which national comparisons are available].

GCE AL/AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	8	100	96	75	46	8.25	6.57
Biology	16	100	88	75	34	7.25	5.25
Business Studies	25	100	92	64	32	7.44	5.50
Chemistry	20	100	90	65	43	6.90	5.90
Classical Studies	10	100	95	10	49	5.80	6.51
Computer Studies	14	100	86	50	23	7.14	4.62
Economics	34	97	89	74	36	8.18	5.52
English Literature	32	100	95	56	37	7.06	5.91
French	10	100	89	60	38	7.60	5.59
Full Design and Technology	8	100	91	50	30	6.75	5.38
General Studies	116	99	85	70	30	7.81	4.91
Geography	34	100	92	68	38	7.88	5.14
German	4	100	91	50	40	6.50	5.81
History	8	100	88	13	35	5.25	5.45
Mathematics	79	100	87	75	43	8.10	5.80
Music	3	100	93	33	35	6.67	5.74
Physics	31	100	88	48	40	7.16	5.67
Sports/ P.E.Studies	8	100	92	38	25	6.00	5.09
Biology AS Level	2	100	52	0	2	1.00	0.79
Business Studies AS Level	1	100	76	100	12	4.00	1.69
German AS Level	1	100	82	0	13	1.00	1.85
Mathematics AS Level	12	33	62	8	15	0.83	1.51

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

Mathematics

The course covers pure mathematics, mechanics and statistics. The inspection covered the AS/A level courses offered by the school. A very high proportion of students take the GCE A level mathematics courses. Their results are stunning and are very high in comparison with the national average. A large group of students also takes further mathematics with even more impressive results.

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

Strengths

- GCE A level results are very high and students achieve very well.
- Teaching is very good in all its aspects leading to very good learning.
- Students' attitudes, interest, concentration and independence are excellent.
- Teachers' commitment to raising the standards of all students is excellent.

Areas for improvement

- The accommodation used for mathematics teaching is unsatisfactory, at present.
- Too little use is made of information and communication technology.
- The more able students sometimes marginalise others during class discussions.

79. The mathematics department does extremely well for its sixth-form students. A very high proportion of those in the school choose to embark on a GCE A level mathematics course. It is the most popular subject by a long way. The retention rate is very high. Their results are stunning and are very high in comparison with the national average. In both 2001 and 2002 three-quarters attained grade A or B and all attained a pass grade. A large group of students also takes further mathematics with even more impressive results. With little room for leeway, GCE A level mathematics results are on an upward trend year-on-year. The department has made very good progress since the previous inspection.
80. The sample of work seen in lessons and in students' ring binders confirms the very high standards. The quality of students' written and oral work is very impressive. They show considerable depth of knowledge and understanding of algebra and trigonometry. The concentration on teaching these topics to a high level in earlier years pays significant dividends. Students tackle topics in pure mathematics, statistics and mechanics with skill and confidence, for example, readily completing complex calculus questions using their previous algebraic knowledge adeptly. In a Year 12 further mathematics lesson, students give impressively quick-fire and cogent responses to help the teacher interpret a challenging statistics question more productively. In discussions, students said that they thoroughly enjoyed the challenges in mathematics.
81. Teaching is very good and students learn very well as a result. Teachers have a very secure knowledge and understanding of A level work and are enthusiastic about it. They often have to demonstrate this in their discussions with very able students. At times lessons are, rightly, more a meeting of minds to search for optimum solutions to problems than the standard teacher led exposition and discussion. Teachers have an exemplary approach of seeking the most elegant and efficient method rather than just grinding out an

answer. This enables students to develop an excellent feel for the beauty and power of mathematics themselves. Teachers have very high expectations of what students can achieve. In an excellent Year 12 pure mathematics lesson the search for a quicker and more elegant method for solving a trigonometric equation, using a previously learnt identity, led to students gaining a much broader and more incisive understanding of the topic. All lessons move at a rapid pace and time is used very effectively. Teachers plan lessons very effectively and are particularly good at using their assessment of students' homework to select the most important topics for further study. This occurred very effectively in a very good Year 13 statistics lesson so that students concentrated on the question that had given them the most difficulty and improved their understanding significantly as a result. A weakness in some lessons is that the more able students are dominant leaving less scope for others to contribute in discussions.

82. The mathematics department is very well led and managed. Commitment to maintaining and raising the standards of all students is excellent. A teacher runs a lunchtime session for 'weaker' students. The department provides opportunities for gifted and talented students through various national challenge competitions with very significant success. Mathematics makes a particularly notable contribution in its position as the lead department in a specialist college. For example, the school organises a regional mathematics circle for ninety students from seventeen secondary schools and there are plans to provide distance learning for sixth form mathematics students in schools with limited staffing resources. The accommodation currently used for sixth form mathematics teaching is too dispersed around the school and lessons sometimes take place in inadequate huts. There are plans to improve this situation dramatically with new facilities. The department makes too little use of information and communication technology to support mathematics. It is expected that the new facilities will also help to overcome this issue.

Sciences

The school offers biology, chemistry and physics at AS/A levels. The examination results for 2001 in chemistry were above the national average. The most recent school results show much improvement. Students attain lower grades in chemistry than in physics and biology. In biology, GCE A level results in 2001 were well above average. In 2002, the first year of the new A2 examination, more than three-quarters of students both in physics and biology gained A or B grades. This represents a higher percentage with these grades than in any previous year under the old A level format.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- Standards at A level are above the national average.
- Quality of teaching is good.
- Positive student attitudes.
- Teachers use their subject expertise to broaden and deepen learning.

Areas for improvement

- To improve the quality of learning resources.
- The use of information and communication technology to support learning.
- Use of assessment data to identify underachievement of individuals more rigorously.

83. GCE A level results in 2001 were above average. All students, with the exception of one, gained at least a pass grade. The retention rates are good. Students have achieved well from their high levels of attainment at GCSE. Standards and progress are good, although students attain lower grades than they do in physics and biology.
84. The standard of work seen in lessons and evident from discussions and analysis of student files is above expectation. Students showed that their earlier experience of chemistry was good and that concepts are well established. For example, Year 13 students have a good understanding of nucleophilic substitution reactions and their importance in organic synthesis. Numerical skills are strong and support the application of the chemistry to complex problems.
85. Students in Year 12, have more variable aptitudes for chemistry, but are achieving well overall in their acquisition of basic knowledge, for example in applying the electron pair repulsion theory to predict the shapes of molecules. There is an emphasis on the development of investigative skills, complementing the experiment-led approach of the Nuffield syllabus followed by the department. The learning experience of the students is constrained due to lack of resources such as molecular models. Also, no use is made of information and communication technology in lessons to support students' learning. However, students said that they enjoyed chemistry.
86. Teaching is good overall. All lessons are well organised and students benefit from the expert knowledge of the teachers. Teachers' expectations are high and students work hard to meet these. Students are attentive and work productively in lessons. The range of teaching methods, however, requires further development; currently there is an over-emphasis on a teacher dominant style teaching.
87. Planning is satisfactory in ensuring that objectives relate appropriately to the specifications for AS and A level. However, insufficient methods are planned for the full range of attainment, so that weaker students are not always supported well enough to ensure full understanding. Not all students participate actively and, whilst they absorb and acquire knowledge, they do not seek to deepen their learning enough through questions or raising points for clarification. Changes in staffing last year had a negative effect on progress, but the problem is now resolved.
88. Leadership and management are good overall. The organisation of daily routine is efficient and teachers work well together as a team. Resources are well managed. Accommodation is satisfactory, though the peeling paintwork in a few laboratories detracts from the overall good atmosphere. Curriculum planning requires continued development and revision with greater detail than that found in examination board syllabuses. There is currently insufficient guidance on opportunities for tasks matching the needs of both higher and lower attaining students. Teaching is monitored through department reviews and analysis of examination results. Better use needs to be made of assessment data to identify underachievement of individuals more rigorously. Improving the quality of learning resources and effective use of information and communication technology in lessons are areas for further improvement.

Biology

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

Strengths

- Attainment at A level is well above the national average.
- Teaching is very good.
- Teachers use their subject expertise to broaden and deepen learning.
- Students are strongly motivated and enjoy the subject due to open friendly relationships with the teachers.

Areas for improvement

- Quality of learning resources.
- The use of information and communication technology.

89. GCE A level results in 2001 were well above average. All students gained at least a pass grade, and the percentage of grades A/B was well above average. Students have achieved well from their high levels of attainment at GCSE. The retention rates are good. The standard of work seen in lessons and evident from discussions and analysis of student files is well above expectations. There is some variation in the work of the students. Many quickly grasp concepts and apply them to challenging problems, for example, Year 13 students understand the principles underlying simple chromatography and apply the concept of Rf values to identify photosynthetic pigments. Numerical skills are strong and statistics are used effectively to support the application of the biology to complex problems.
90. Students in Year 12 are achieving well overall in their acquisition of basic knowledge, for example in the reproduction of flowering plants. Investigation skills are well developed, with a significant emphasis on analysing results and evaluating experimental outcomes.
91. Teaching is very good overall. In lessons, the subject knowledge is developed in a lively manner that inspires an enthusiastic response from the students and results in very effective learning. All lessons are well organised and students benefit from the expert knowledge of the teachers. Expectations are high. Students are confident and encouraged by the helpful, friendly and supportive climate that pervades. Homework is used constructively and marking is regular so that students are quite clear from feedback about what they need to do to improve.
92. A lack of higher quality learning resources has inhibited the department in developing a diversity of learning methods. Also, information and communication technology is not used in the laboratory to support and enhance students' learning. Nevertheless, students use their initiative and considerable intelligence to consolidate their understanding and learning of complex ideas using all available resources. They also share ideas with great maturity. The consistently positive attitude of students is a major contributory factor to their overall very good learning. In discussion with inspectors they said that they enjoyed the subject. The effective use of information and communication technology in lessons is an area for further improvement.

93. Leadership and management are very good. The organisation of daily routine is efficient and teachers work very well together as a team. Resources are well managed. Accommodation is satisfactory, though peeling paintwork in a few laboratories detracts from the overall good atmosphere. Prepared curriculum plans give clear guidance and example activities. Teaching is carefully monitored through department reviews and analysis of examination results. Strong emphasis is now given to target-setting and evaluation of student achievement in relation to their previous attainment at GCSE. Improving the quality of learning resources and effective use of information and communication technology in lessons are areas for further improvement.

Physics

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

Strengths

- Standards are well above the national average.
- Quality of teaching and learning is good.
- Very positive student attitudes.

Areas for improvement

- The use of information and communication technology to support learning.

94. The number of students achieving an A or B grade at AS level physics in 2001 was well above the national average. In 2002, the percentage of students achieving this standard increased. A sample of students' work shows that this trend will continue. In 2002, the first year of the new A2 physics examination, more than three-quarters of students gained A or B grades. This represents a higher percentage with these grades than in any previous year under the old A level format.
95. The number of students who start the AS course, having achieved the entry requirement of an A or B pass at GCSE, is increasing; sixty students started in 2003. Very few students drop out of the course during the first year and, having completed the AS course, most choose to continue into the second year for the A2 examination.
96. Levels of achievement are very good on both courses. A significant number of students joins the school for the sixth form. These students are rapidly integrated into the department and the differences in previous experiences are quickly covered. The modular nature of the course together with regular testing and the sharing of predicted grades ensures that all students know how well they are doing and how much improvement they need to make. The department has high expectations of both the standard of work and the amount to be completed.
97. The quality of learning is good. Students make gains in knowledge in lessons and are encouraged to develop their understanding through short practicals. In one session, the introduction of the formulae governing resistance in small networks was immediately followed by a quick experiment that enabled students to demonstrate the theory. In addition, students validated their results using a simple test that required the answer to be smaller than any part of the network. This enabled students to make rapid progress. They worked hard and had a clear understanding of their progress through valuable feedback from the teacher. The department should now try to encourage more independent learning from students.

98. The students, when asked, were very supportive of the department and its work. They felt they knew how well they were doing. These positive attitudes are symptomatic of those observed in lessons. Students arrive at lessons ready to work; they concentrate well, are supportive of each other and show respect for each other and the environment.
99. The foundation of the success of the subject is good teaching. The school is fortunate to have three highly qualified physics teachers supported by an able technician. Students benefit from genuine expertise, good planning and preparation, stimulating delivery, knowledgeable support and valuable feedback. In the lessons seen, teachers had a good rapport with the students and mixed the approaches used effectively.
100. The department is very well led. An example of this is the way the results from previous years have been analysed resulting in improvements to the approach to practical work. A similar review is now being applied to other aspects of the course. The department uses adequate accommodation well and the resources, although ageing, are appropriate to the courses. Information and communication technology is not used sufficiently and the greatest challenge to the department will be to integrate information and communication technology into the subject as the resources become available.

BUSINESS

Both business studies and economics are offered in the sixth form at AS/A level. The A level results in 2001 in business studies were well above the national average and this represents good achievement. In 2002, the department secured even higher results. The results for the students taking the AS and A2 economics examinations in 2002 were very high. Students were particularly successful in obtaining the higher level passes. The results for 2001 had been even better.

Business Studies

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

Strengths

- Standards achieved in examinations are consistently very high.
- The teachers have very good knowledge and understanding that supports very good learning.
- Students are very well motivated to learn and work very well together in lessons. Relationships are very good, often excellent.
- There is a very good range of extra-curricular business activities.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.

Areas for improvement

- Widen the opportunities for using information and communication technology.
- Strengthen the students' independent learning skills.
- Develop a wider range of resources for learning.

101. The A level results in 2001 were well above the national average and this represents good achievement. In 2002, the department secured even higher results with over three-quarters of the students obtaining an A or B grade and this represents very good achievement. Over the last five years the department has consistently secured very good results. Results in business studies are better than the average of results for other

subjects in the sixth form. The AS examination has been successfully introduced and a majority of students secured an A or B grade in 2001 with almost half securing an A grade. The results in 2002 were also very good although slightly fewer students obtained the highest grades. The retention rate is very high and almost all the students go on to the second year of the course. The subject matches the aspirations of the students very well as about half of the candidates continue with the subject at university. The take-up for business studies is about double the average achieved in other grammar schools and this reflects the very high standards that are consistently reached at Wilson's.

102. Standards observed in lessons and in written work are above average in both Years 12 and 13 and achievement overall is good. Year 13 students' understanding of business concepts is impressive, in particular Ansoff's Matrix and Porter's theories. Students' answers show that they can very effectively apply the theoretical models to relevant case study material. In Year 12 the students are very skilful in working in groups to prepare class presentations of their research into the various methods that affect workforce planning. In the group work observed, their attitudes to each other and to the subject are excellent and there is very good evidence of substantial progress being made over time. Overall the students have very positive attitudes to the subject and work very co-operatively together in many group work situations.
103. Teaching is good overall with some very good features and all students learn quickly as a result. They respond very positively to the teachers' very good knowledge and understanding and to the thorough planning of the lessons. The students ask very searching questions to ensure that their understanding is firmly based. Students are expected to work hard and the pace is challenging, although in one lesson there was too much teacher led exposition. Overall the teachers are very enthusiastic about the subject and this enthusiasm is readily shared with the students, in addition they use their expertise to provide a good variety of different learning experiences for the students. The department is particularly strong in providing a very wide range of extra-curricular activities including a very popular Young Enterprise scheme, a good range of conferences and the opportunity for students to share their own enthusiasms and expertise with local primary pupils. Lesson objectives are effectively shared with the students so that they can assess their own progress throughout the lesson. Assessment is good with work marked carefully and thoroughly, according to exam criteria and all students have a very clear idea of their progress and what they have to do to strengthen their understanding and overall performance. The students respond very well to the teachers' high expectations and they work with great enthusiasm and purpose.
104. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. Students are thoroughly prepared for the examinations by regular testing and case study reviews. The key skills of business studies are very carefully and systematically taught. The department is very well organised and the three teachers work effectively as a team. Since the last inspection good progress has been made particularly in raising standards still further and in providing students with a very good curriculum. The use of information and communication technology has improved, particularly with the introduction of the individual study projects. However, access to computer hardware is limited both within the department and within the sixth form centre. Independent learning skills are beginning to be strengthened through individual research. However these need to be developed further through a more systematic approach to resource-based learning. The department's book resources are fairly limited and the students are not yet given an Internet source research list, although plans have been made to enhance the book stock in the library. One area to be

strengthened is curriculum planning, which is mainly in outline with limited references to learning activities, and the resources that are to be used. Overall the students speak very highly of the tuition that they receive and the strong encouragement from the teachers to achieve very well.

Economics

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

Strengths

- Standards that are well above average.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use many current examples and well-prepared resources to enhance the curriculum.
- The head of department manages the department very well, with high expectations for academic standards and the ability to implement change.
- Very good, positive relationships between staff and students that engender a strong partnership in learning.
- A popular subject that prepares students very well for higher education and their role as citizens.

Areas for improvement

- Planning has not been updated to take account of wider current curriculum development.

105. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average, reflecting the high quality of departmental leadership and teaching. Students maintain the very good rate of progress that was a characteristic of their achievements by the end of Year 11. They enjoy a subject that focuses on current issues and prepares them well for higher education and citizenship. No judgement can be made on improvement, as the previous inspection did not report on economics.

106. The results for the students taking the AS and A2 economics examinations in 2002 were very high when compared to the national average and to results of similar schools. Students were particularly successful in obtaining the higher level passes. The results for 2001 were even better.

107. These high standards are mirrored in the written work of the students, as well as by their knowledge shown in lessons. A Year 13 class studying interest rates had a very good grasp of the concepts and could relate them to the viewpoints of different groups. The teacher's very good subject knowledge was an important factor in their success. This was also the case during a lively Year 12 discussion on long-term unemployment when the teacher's references to current practice clearly illustrated the various approaches. The pace of learning is very good. Students have covered the syllabus in depth, enhanced by excellent links between theory and applied economics.

108. All teaching is good and very good in two-thirds of the lessons. Students benefit from the teachers' enthusiasm and ability to communicate effectively up-to-date, expert subject knowledge. Lesson plans are very good and a range of well-prepared and chosen materials is used effectively. The very good questioning confirms and extends learning. There is a sense of student participation, promoted through a range of extra-curricular activities such as involvement in writing competitions and banking games. Students

comment favourably on the quality of teachers' feedback that pinpoints mastery and highlights areas that need improving, although they felt that marking could be more regular. In the odd lesson, too little time was left for the thorough reinforcement of learning at the end of the lesson.

109. The commitment of teachers, and positive attitudes of the students' results in a highly effective learning partnership. A high percentage of the students are informed and confident contributors to the good quality discussions that are a feature of many of the lessons. They appreciate the continuous support that they receive, including the development of the intranet to promote interactive learning. Students work well in intellectually challenging lessons. They produce good research for their assignments, although they feel that the lack of easy access to computers makes the task more difficult. There are high expectations that students will make very good progress and they respond accordingly. Hardly anyone drops out of classes. Economics is a popular subject; some students would welcome the opportunity to study for a higher qualification than the A level.
110. Very good leadership promotes very high achievement. The head of department has a clear vision of how the subject should evolve and works hard to ensure that this happens. Recent initiatives include a focus on developing the intranet to increase students' understanding and promote independent learning. Self and peer assessment are well integrated into this system. Economics makes a good contribution to students' personal development, but curriculum planning has not been extended to take account of current curriculum developments. There is no detailed reference to spiritual, moral, social and cultural education or citizenship. However, related issues are directly the subject of discussion in class.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The AS/A level computing course was inspected. The numbers for the AS and the A level course have increased indicating the increased popularity of the subject. Preliminary enquires show that these numbers are likely to increase even further with the planned information communication technology course for the next academic year.

Information communication technology Computing

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good based on strong subject knowledge and computing skills.
- Students have a very positive approach to the subject.
- Above average standards are achieved.

Areas for improvement

- Students have few opportunities to experience computing in a 'work' situation.
- The ventilation is unsatisfactory.
- To provide computers in the sixth form area to support private study.

111. The most recent results for the AS level computing examination show that students achieved well. All the students entered for the 2002 A level examination achieved a grade, with half gaining the higher grade of A and B. These results are well above average when

compared with the 2001 national figures. Results have shown an upward trend over the last three years.

112. The work seen in lessons, examination of previous work and discussion with students in Years 12 and 13 show that standards overall are above average. Students have a good understanding of the database and are confident to enter the data. More confident students are beginning to understand the use of a macro and include the procedure in their projects. Students have an established knowledge of programming language and procedures. They are beginning to use the Pascal language and are familiar with the syntax, successfully using it for their calculator project. Discussion with students about their projects shows that they have a clear vision about the future developments and how to overcome problems. These have been well researched and students are aware that the application must be suitable for a non-literate information and communication technology user. Although students discuss the use of information technology in its wider context they have not had the benefit of first-hand observation of its use in large organisations or talks from visiting speakers about the complexities of a large network.
113. Students' attitudes are positive showing a very good level of interest. They are confident to discuss their work, commenting that they find the work challenging and that they consider the teaching to be of a good quality. In discussion all the students felt that they were well advised about the course and are well supported. Some students however did express concern about the frequent change of teachers.
114. The quality of teaching is good and as a result students learn well. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and computing skills, using their expertise well to guide students. Teachers have a clear understanding of the requirements of the course. The planning of lessons is thorough with supportive revision booklets effectively assisting students' progress and understanding. Students comment favourably about these booklets saying that they find them very useful. Teachers have high expectations of students, and set them challenging work. Students respond well to this and enjoy the challenge. Relationships between teacher and students are good. Students welcome the individual support they are given to develop their coursework and are confident to seek help when required, leading to good learning.
115. The management and leadership of the subject are satisfactory. The head of department has had responsibility for the subject for a short period and he has had a significant impact in a very short time. The resit AS module results last summer have been completely turned around and are now good. He has, a clear vision about the future development of the subject. Although students have access to computers for personal study there are no computers in the sixth form students' study area for private study. The accommodation is unsatisfactory. The rooms are spacious but they are poorly ventilated. The retention rate is satisfactory. Approximately half the students continue their studies from AS to A2. Although this is less than normally seen, those students who did not continue, made it clear at the beginning of the course that they did not intend to study beyond the AS level.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education is offered at AS/A Level. The examination is based on the interaction between the theory and the practice of physical education. In 2001 and 2002, all A level students achieved grades A to E. Thirty-eight per cent achieved grades A or B in 2001, 40 per cent in 2002. These are typical of physical education results in recent years.

Physical education

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

Strengths

- Standards overall are very high in examinations, activities and course work.
- Very good quality of highly organised, motivating teaching.
- Students with excellent attitudes and high levels of concentration.
- Very good quality of learning.
- Excellent quality and take-up of extra-curricular activities.
- Outdoor facilities and swimming pool provide excellent supports to learning.

Areas for improvement

- Further development of students' individual profiles and self-assessment.

116. Standards are very high. Those of examination results since the last inspection have been well above national averages. In 2001 and 2002, all A level students achieved grades A to E. Thirty-eight per cent achieved grades A or B in 2001, 40 per cent in 2002. These are typical of physical education results in recent years. Students' A level and AS level results are better than their performance in other subjects. The retention rates are good.

117. Written work is of a very high standard both of thought and presentation. Folders and course work show mature writing based on thoughtful research. Progress over time in written work is well above expected levels.

118. Development of understanding is very successful. In a lesson on discrimination and prejudice, Year 12 students moved from understanding stereotyping to considering underlying disadvantages and lack of opportunity. Year 13 students realised that a lesson on production of sporting excellence in Australia was really an investigation into athletic skills and attributes. Those with quickest understanding of basics made significant progress in evaluating differing national approaches.

119. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. There were excellent features in all lessons seen. Planning of all lessons observed was excellent. That for learning sequences over time is also excellent. Teachers know their subject matter very well. Teachers achieve determined pace. This leads to students' significant gains in understanding. Very skilled questioning challenges students' thinking and supports their success.

120. Students have excellent attitudes coupled with concentration on their learning. Those with the greatest understanding are encouraged to go further by carefully structured and linked questions. This is effectively supported by individual guidance in the marking of written work.
121. The subject is managed and organised very well. Weekly recreational games periods involve the efficient organising of a large number of teachers and activities. A variety of venues provides for specialist activities such as golf. Extra-curricular activities involve about 20 staff as well as parents and other coaches and helpers. Assessment is thorough and accurate. Individual self-assessment and learning profiling are being developed. They are still at a developmental stage. The department plans to take these further, including them in its staff development priorities.
122. Most students use the Internet purposefully to support research and course work. The department does not use information and communication technology in lessons. Otherwise the quality, range and use of resources are very strong features. The gymnasium is not large. This necessitates careful planning by teachers for effective activities and learning. One squash court is made to double as an academic teaching room. Again, teachers overcome this difficulty by careful preparation and planning. The swimming pool and the outdoor facilities together provide excellent support for teaching and learning. There are no health and safety issues to do with accommodation.
123. The range of extra-curricular activities is excellent. The majority of students take part in more than one activity. They achieve national standards and success in a range of activities (water polo, swimming, football, cricket, athletics and badminton). Teams are successful, often nationally, in these and other activities. Clubs provide many opportunities for those wishing for recreational sport. Activities such as Tough Guy endurance events involve large numbers of students. Many activities involve students from a very wide range of backgrounds. Activities give strong support to charitable outcomes. They show students working with and caring for those who might otherwise not be able to take part.
124. Since the previous inspection, the number of students taking A level has remained buoyant. High standards are being maintained. The range of course options has been refined. Students strongly respect the relevance of these course options. They take great pleasure in their studies.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design and music were inspected. The school also offers media studies. This area was not reported on although one lesson was observed. There has been steady improvement in the GCE art and design A level examination results over the past three years and in 2001, 75 per cent of students who took the examination achieved the highest grades A to B, which was well above the national figure of 41 per cent who achieved grades A to B in that year. The retention rates are good. Very small numbers of students have taken music over the past five years. This makes comparison with national figures inappropriate. Recent changes in staffing and have impacted positively on the attainment of students currently studying the subject despite timetabling difficulties.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good; teachers are very well informed and possess good subject knowledge.
- The teachers' questioning technique is very good and students participate fully in discussion.
- Students are very articulate and are prepared to express their views and opinions openly.
- Students make very good use of traditional media and materials.

Areas for improvement

- Assessing, recording and tracking systems lack rigour at present.
- Target-setting for students is not sharply enough focused on learning goals.
- Access to modern technology; photography and information and communication technology.

125. There has been steady improvement in the GCE A level examination results over the past three years and in 2001, 75 per cent of students who took the examination achieved the highest grades A to B compared to 41 per cent nationally. However, in 2002 there was a significant decline in the proportion of students who attained the highest grades of A to B in the school. This was still well above the number of 42 per cent who achieved grades A to B nationally. The number of students studying art and design is small and this means that national comparisons are of limited value.
126. The standard of work that students are currently producing is well above the national average. Year 13 students make very good use of their visual diaries in which to record initial research studies and to develop ideas that lead to final outcomes in both two and three dimensions. They employ written notes and images, to clarify their intentions. They also show that they have developed the capacity to analyse the work of artists such as Picasso and Matisse and make use of this experience to inform and improve the quality of their own paintings. However, some students continue to have difficulty in gaining control over their chosen medium, such as oil paint, to communicate their concepts and ideas clearly to a wider audience. Year 13 students are currently investigating the relationship between Illusion and Reality in art, which has involved them in critically evaluating and comparing the paintings of William Kalf and Paul Cézanne. Most students are very well informed and make perceptive comments about the work of these artists in respect of their use of composition and colour to create the illusion of three-dimensional space.
127. Year 12 students are also making very good progress and producing work of a standard that is well above the national average. They are articulate and have developed a very good understanding of the development of ideas and concepts in an art historical context. They are well informed and prepared to engage in discussion about the work of artists and designers such as Ghiberti and Brunelleschi. During one lesson seen, they expressed critical but informed views and opinions about the work of these two artists. They make very good use of their visual diaries as an effective means of collecting a wide range of material that is developed to form the basis for final outcomes in two and three dimensions. They too make excellent use of written notes, combined with their drawn studies, to state what it is that they have set out to do. These notes clarify their intentions,

both for themselves and for a wider audience. For the most part they work with very traditional media and materials such as pencils, coloured pencils, water-based paints, acrylic paints and oil paints to produce finished paintings.

128. Teaching is very good. Teachers possess good subject knowledge and are very well informed. Questioning is used very effectively to open up discussion so that students can show their depth of understanding and breadth of knowledge concerning the communication of concepts and ideas through art, craft and design activity. Planning is very good and good use is made of exemplar material at the start of lessons, usually in the form of art history books. There is an opportunity here to make much greater use of modern technology in the form of slide strips, videocassettes, CD Roms or even computers to provide a more exciting and stimulating start to lessons. Teachers are well organised and employ methods that are wholly suited to the nature of the art and craft activities. These can range from whole group discussion to interaction with individual students to help them resolve problems. Due to very good teaching, learning is also very good.
129. The subject is very well led and management is very good. The head of department has very clear aims and provides very good leadership for other teachers in the department. He is committed to building on past achievement and to improving standards. Target-setting, based on analysis of students' performance, is improving, but assessing and recording systems presently lack rigour. Much greater recorded detail is required to enable teachers to provide more accurate and more informed feedback to students.
130. The current curriculum would benefit from a wider media focus. Portfolios could be improved by a greater emphasis on exploration of ideas, concepts, attitudes, values and beliefs through photography or information and communication technology. However, some of the highest-attaining students have begun to make use of photographic images in their visual diaries as secondary reference points for their own work. At present students have very little opportunity, within the context of the art studios, to develop their ideas and concepts by using computers, digital cameras, scanners and printers.
131. In relation to the small size of groups in both Year 12 and Year 13 accommodation is satisfactory. Year 13 students have their own studio space in which to work. There is a lack of storage space with limited facility to use modern technology. Students said that they enjoyed the subject and appreciated the fact that they had some individual studio space. Display of art and craftwork throughout the school is very good which serves to raise the profile of this specialist area.
132. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Teaching is now very good which results in very good learning. Students continue to achieve grades in the GCE examination that are well above the national average.

Music

Currently one course is on offer, leading to AS and A level in Music. Very few students in the sixth form are taking the subject. At the time of the inspection, not all students were present. There was a limited amount of evidence available. Evidence was gathered from individual discussions with each student, a review of their folders of work, and an extended observation of a lesson.

Overall the quality of provision for music is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The commitment of the teacher to improving the provision.
- The very good relationships between teacher and students.
- The quality of individual support given by the teacher in lessons.

Areas for improvement

- The timetable provision for the subject.
- The process of tracking students' progress and the involvement of students in their own learning.
- Access to facilities to work independently during private study time.

133. The attainment of students currently in the sixth form is below that which is expected nationally. Very small numbers of students have taken music over the past five years. This makes comparison with national figures inappropriate. The teacher has been in post for less than a year. Although recent changes in staffing, limitations on resourcing and timetabling have had an effect on the attainment of students currently studying the subject, rapid progress is being made in consolidating students' achievement.

134. Students are making satisfactory progress but are starting from a low base. They are not able to discriminate between composers' styles, and are not forthcoming in their appraisal of each other's work or of the composers they have studied. Theoretical understanding is limited. There is a lack of technical security and confidence in performing. In composing, students attain higher standards. They are more confident when developing individual styles than when writing pastiche.

135. Teaching is satisfactory with some good features. The teacher has a good command of the subject. This was demonstrated by the way in which students were challenged to find ways of improving their performances in a practical session. Students are at different stages in the course, which limits the amount of time the teacher can spend on each, within a relatively small timetable allocation. The individual verbal support that the teacher gives is positive and of good quality. In the lesson observed, teaching was hampered by difficulties with the computer software and this prevented progress. Students are unsure of the exact requirements and standards of the examination. The relationship between teacher and students is excellent. Students lack a sense of urgency about their work.

136. The teacher has a vision for the development of sixth form music courses in the future. There is a departmental handbook, but no scheme of work. The teaching room and resources are more than adequate for the needs of a small group. A lack of soundproofing in the department makes concentration difficult. The department does not offer a facility for students to work independently during their study time. The computers are located in the main classroom that is otherwise used for teaching. This limits the progress that students can make on composition work between lessons. Students are not clear about their standards of work. There was little evidence of individual targets being set to focus them on improvement. Students have clear ideas about the grades they are hoping to achieve but the teacher has not generated these.

137. The department has undergone much recent change. It is difficult to identify progress since the last inspection because of this. The progress that has been made since September is significant. Students recognise this and value the commitment and support that the teacher is giving them.

HUMANITIES

Geography and history are offered at AS/A level. The GCE A level results in 2002 in geography were well above the national average. Religious education was not inspected.

Geography

Overall, the quality of provision in geography is **excellent**.

Strengths

- The quality of the teaching and learning is consistently excellent.
- The head of department provides clear direction and is a very good role model.
- The relationships between students and staff are outstanding.
- Results are well above average and are very good.
- The enthusiastic team of staff have developed a very successful department.

Areas for improvement

- There is a need to improve the access to information and communication technology facilities to enable the staff and students to utilise their potential fully.
- The human geography books available to the students need to include a variety of specialist books to encourage independent research beyond the Internet.
- There is a need to focus on the performance of students in the synoptic paper to raise the proportion of A grades.

138. The department's results compare very well with the school results. The GCE A level results in 2002 were well above the national average. All students who took the exam gained an A-C grade with the main proportion of students gaining an A/B grade. In relation to their prior attainment, progress has been very good. All the students did very well indeed.

139. The standards of work of the current students are well above average. In Year 13, work seen during the inspection was excellent. In lessons, much is expected of the students. The excellent teaching challenges the students in every possible way. The lesson structure and use of a variety of teaching methods enables clearly focused individual student learning. In one lesson on the tiger economies, statistical information was used very effectively to prompt students to use their own knowledge and to think through the reasons for the development of the economies. In another lesson, careful use of references from a complex text served to encourage students to consider the ideological complexities of the use of foreign aid.

140. Students in Year 12 are well into their course and are achieving a very good standard. They show excellent knowledge of population theory and inner city development. The students have successfully moved from GCSE to the AS course. The use of study skills handbooks compiled by the department has eased the problems of essay writing and comprehension of AS questions for the students. The teachers demand much of the students. In a lesson on population, students were challenged to think through pro natalist

theory using excellent probing questions by the teacher. There is a need to focus on the performance of students in the synoptic paper to raise the proportion of A grades.

141. Teaching is excellent overall. The main feature is one of clear objectives, excellent planning, challenging teaching, a brisk pace and a range of methods. The learning that is taking place is of an excellent standard. Teachers show superb subject knowledge and use it very well to set high standards for all the students. This in its turn inspires them to work to achieve their very best. In a lesson on newly industrialised countries, the teacher focused on command capitalism and ably moved the students through an understanding of the effect upon various countries' development using a variety of methods and resources.
142. The written work seen during the inspection included a variety of different tasks. Homework is used well. In one lesson about foreign aid, the students were set a homework task to find out what they could about the Volta region and to be prepared to discuss and comment upon the quality of aid given to the region in the next lesson. Marking of the work is very good with clear, well-written comments to help students to work towards their target grade. Students are very confident in using the Internet for research purpose and able to extract information from other sources and make very good notes. However there is little reference to texts in lessons as a source of research and information. The teachers use information and communication technology as much as is possible in lessons but lack of access restricts the potential use of the resource by the department. Examples of a virtual study of the Dorset coastline carried out by the students in their own time served to develop a deeper understanding of coasts and increase the quality of independent research by the students.
143. Students learn well. The relationships between staff and students are outstanding. The students respond very positively to the variety of teaching styles and the support they get from the staff. In lessons, they are confident to discuss ideas and offer individual responses. They are mature and work very well with each other. The annual fieldwork trips to South Wales and Kent are well organised and enable the students to develop geographical and social skills. The fieldwork is planned to help the students to develop a deeper understanding of the skills required to answer synoptic questions. Student fieldwork portfolios seen during the inspection were well written.
144. The excellent teaching and learning is the result of the subject being very well led and managed. The strong teamwork is evident as is the sharing of resources and ideas as the department work in close proximity to each other. There is a real commitment to building on what has been achieved and improving standards. The new planning documents reflect a range of teaching and learning approaches, map independent learning activities, suggest resources and set appropriate targets. Student tracking and target-setting are very well established and used by the department to set specific individual learning goals.

History

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

Strengths

- Teaching is very good and supports very good learning.
- There is very good teacher knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject.
- Students have very good independent learning skills.
- Some of the student attitudes are excellent.
- There is a very good History Society, effectively led by the students.
- The standards of the recent A2 individual assignments are excellent.

Areas for improvement

- The monitoring of the students' progress.
- The strengthening of curriculum planning to include resources and learning activities.
- Development of guided reading and Internet source lists.

145. In the 2001 A level examination standards were at national expectation, with a small number of students securing A or B grades. Taking into account the previous attainment of the candidates, achievement was inadequate. However with the introduction of the new AS syllabus in 2001 a substantial improvement can be noted with over half of the students achieving A or B grades. This trend has continued in 2002 with further improvement in the AS examination with over two-thirds of the students securing the highest two grades and almost half achieving an A grade. This represents good achievement. A similar pattern can be seen in the 2002 A level examination with two-thirds of the students achieving the highest two grades. This represents good achievement. The retention rate is very good and the courses are a good match for the students' aspirations.
146. Observations of lessons and a thorough scrutiny of samples of students work confirm that currently standards are well above average. This is consistent with the results of 2002 and indicates that students in history are making very good progress. The introduction of the new AS and A2 syllabuses and a review of the approach to the preparation of the individual assignments have led to an overall improvement in standards. Year 12 students can, with confidence, use a series of complex graphs, to analyse effectively the impact of the political and economic developments of the Weimar republic. Year 13 students can discuss, in pairs, the economic developments of the German Democratic Republic and robustly challenge each other's ideas, and then have an excellent class debate on the issues. Students listen very carefully to each other's arguments and the relationships in many instances are excellent. The interrogation of documentary evidence and the development of the historical arguments are most impressive. The current Year 13 students are achieving very well, in line with the improving trend of the department.
147. Students are learning very well and their progress is strongly supported by the quality of the teaching in the department. Overall the teaching is very good. The teachers are experienced and have very good subject knowledge that they share readily with the students and they are scholarly and enthusiastic historians. Lessons are, in the main, stimulating and exciting and students are given very good opportunities to develop their understanding of history. There are very effective question and answer sessions with a high level of student involvement. The pace of learning is very challenging particularly in Year 13. Students are given thorough examination preparation particularly in the individual assignments in Year 13, where excellent standards were achieved in 2002. Year 12

students receive adequate guidance for their course essay on the impact of New Liberalism in the early twentieth century. Marking is thorough; however the comments need, in some instances, to give clearer advice on how to improve the work. Currently students do not have a comprehensive homework timetable that would enable them to plan their research more effectively. Information and communication technology is extensively used for homework essays and particularly for the longer assignments. Students receive good advice and guidance about additional reading as and when the relevant topic occurs; it may give additional support to their studies if a guided reading list, including Internet sources is provided earlier in the course.

148. The department is well led by an experienced head of department who has encouraged the staff to prepare thoroughly for the new courses. He has reviewed past practice and introduced new approaches to improve students learning, although the departmental monitoring of students' progress can still be improved particularly in the day-to-day tracking of students' contributions to the subject. Planning documents are being rewritten but have yet to include a full list of the resources used or the range of learning activities employed. The chosen syllabuses enable students to develop a very good understanding of both Britain in the early twentieth century and Germany in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Teachers have very high expectations of the students and they respond very positively to the challenges presented to them. In the very best lessons observed the pace of learning is impressive. Students are being constantly challenged to extend their learning and the commitment of the students to the subject is very high. One of the strengths of the department is the History Society that offers a wide range of extra-curricular learning opportunities and is led effectively by the students themselves. Improvements since the last inspection have been good with improving standards, better teaching and with students developing very good independent learning skills.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The English department caters for some 85 students on A/AS level courses in English language and English literature. In 2001, results at A level in English literature were well above the national average. All students were successful in gaining pass grades in both language and literature examinations. Over a third gained A and B grades. Results in 2001 for the new, AS level courses were good. There was a significant improvement in 2002

English

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

Strengths

- Examination results are well above the national average.
- Teaching is very good.
- Students have very good attitudes. They work hard to achieve high standards.

Areas for improvement

- Methods to help the full range of students make an active contribution to lessons.
- Best practice in marking and assessment of students' work could be applied more consistently.

149. Numbers have increased in recent years, following the introduction of language courses in 2000. The retention rates are good. Standards on entry are well above average, reflecting the pattern of high attainment at GCSE in the subject. In 2001, results at A level in English

literature were well above the national average, as they have been consistently in recent years. Over half of students gained the highest A and B grades. The 2002 results were still better. More than two-thirds gained the highest grades in both literature and language examinations, the first results for the latter course. These results were above average for similar, highly selective boys' grammar schools. Results in 2001 for the new, AS level courses were good. All students were successful in gaining pass grades in both language and literature examinations. Over a third gained A and B grades. There was a significant improvement in 2002, with two-thirds gaining the highest grades in the AS level English language course and three-quarters in English literature.

150. Work seen during the inspection confirms these standards. Students put forward and justify their opinions articulately, though in some lessons there could be greater opportunities to participate in and develop discussion. They demonstrate very good analytical, close-reading skills in work seen for all courses. Writing is a strength. Essays are thorough and well structured, with detailed reference to texts studied. Most students make a confident and perceptive analysis of character, theme and style in the plays, novels and poetry set for literature courses. They produce mature and systematic evaluations of the use of English in language courses. Coursework assignments reflect individual interests here. Very good examples from Year 13 students included a detailed comparison of the war diaries of Field Marshal Alan Brooke with the journals of Sylvia Plath, and a leaflet for parents on language acquisition by children. All students make good use of opportunities to redraft and polish their writing. Essays are presented to a high standard, using word-processing skills to good advantage. The achievement of individual students is very good at both A and AS level. The great majority reach or exceed their target grades in examinations, based on expectations derived from GCSE results and wider academic records. At all levels of attainment, they increase their breadth of understanding through reading relevant critical texts and through background research on the cultural context of works studied.
151. Teaching is very good. Planning to ensure the coverage of work is thorough. Teachers' expectations are high, particularly for the development of written work. In the best practice, students' essays are assessed promptly, with detailed written comments that evaluate achievement constructively against specific examination grade criteria. Teachers monitor students' progress carefully and are prepared to give additional personal help and guidance where it is needed. Above all, teachers know their subject very well, and have a very good understanding of what students need to do to meet examining board requirements. The most effective lessons featured a lively interchange of ideas, and involved students actively in the work. A successful balance between teacher input and student contribution was not always fully achieved, however. Some lessons seen were too teacher-led. Students remained passive for long stretches, or the teacher's role inhibited them from expressing their own views fully. In these instances, more opportunities to involve the full range of students could be created, to help them explore ideas by testing and challenging each other in open discussion. Teaching methods can also lack variety. Students find it hard to maintain concentration if the same activity or technique continues throughout a long lesson. In some cases, there could also be more direct liaison between teachers who share the same group, to ensure progression in course coverage and to plan homework assignments more effectively, in order to avoid undue burdens on students at coursework deadlines.

152. Students have very good attitudes to the subject and work hard throughout their courses to increase their knowledge and understanding. Teachers do much to encourage them to develop independent learning skills, through wider reading, note making and research. The best practice in assessment of written work could apply more consistently, however, to help students understand their own learning better. Particularly in the first half of the course, they often have only a broad idea of target grades and what they need to do to improve their work. Assessment data and criteria could be used more explicitly in some classes to inform teaching and learning, leading to more focused efforts to set specific targets for improvement. More generally, teachers aim to widen students' horizons through external visits, study days and theatre trips, though opportunities have been relatively limited in recent terms. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities for sixth formers, however, including debating and public speaking societies, a magazine, newsletter and a creative writing group.
153. Leadership and management of English in the sixth form are good. Planning for the subject is thorough. Regular departmental meetings develop effective communication. Teachers are well qualified and experienced. Staff development and training is well supported. In particular, importance is attached to keeping up-to-date with changes in examination requirements at this level. A programme to monitor standards of teaching and learning throughout the school is in place. This could be further developed in the sixth form, with a more systematic evaluation of teaching in order to ensure that the best practice applies consistently and to improve co-ordination between teachers.

Modern foreign languages

The focus of the inspection was on French. Latin, German and Spanish are also offered at AS/A level.

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

Strengths

- Attainment in both Year 12 and 13 is above average; examination results at A level and AS level have been consistently good.
- Most of the teaching is good and some is very good; teachers have high expectations of their students.
- Relationships are good and students' attitudes are positive.

Areas for improvement

- There is little documentation and there are few written policies. This would create difficulties for teachers new to the department.
- There is an absence of suitably detailed schemes of work.

154. Results at A level and AS level have been consistently good over the last few years, well above the national average. They also compare favourably with results in other subjects in the school. The retention rates are good. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
155. The standard of work in speaking and listening seen in lessons was generally very good. It is facilitated by the teachers' skilled use of French throughout all lessons and by the relaxed but businesslike atmosphere that prevails. Higher-attaining students are motivated and stretched because they are expected to respond at a high level. On a number of occasions students were observed using French to communicate and joke with each other in class. For example, when a Year 12 student was given his copy of a magazine, his neighbour whispered, "Il faut pas que tu la manges!" Pronunciation and intonation are

generally good. The written work seen in students' files showed evidence of a wide range of attainment in a variety of tasks.

156. Teaching is good overall. Some lessons are very good. All of the teachers are experienced and well qualified, and communicate great enthusiasm for their subject. Lessons have clear aims, the best also being characterised by good pace and a variety of activities. All teachers have high expectations of students, who respond to the tasks set in a mature way. In class the correction of students' errors takes place in a supportive and non-threatening environment. In the best lessons students are encouraged to use French in active situations such as games, role play and presentations, interlaced with humour; for example, Year 12 students competently and wittily performed a mock television interview of people affected by the shipwreck of an oil tanker. In these lessons they are also given opportunities to develop independence and to take responsibility for their own learning, as when Year 13 students were each asked to research an aspect of the novel they were studying and present the information to the class. Teachers give students plenty of practice of examination techniques, and the students spoken to felt confident about what they had to do to achieve good grades. In lessons that are satisfactory but less successful, students are not actively engaged by the tasks presented, with the result that their responses in French are short and uninspired. The quality of marking seen in students' files varied; some gave students advice on how to improve their work, while other comments were perfunctory. The absence of an agreed marking scheme was mentioned in the last inspection report.
157. The students in French classes are mature, attentive and engaged in their work. Many show great enthusiasm and increasing confidence in oral work, which they said they had been daunted by at the start of the course. Relationships between students and staff are good.
158. The accommodation for French is satisfactory. A limited range of resources was seen, although in one lesson in Year 12, the students filmed some good oral work for the purposes of record-keeping and later assessment and analysis. Students are also provided with authentic and up-to-date reading and listening materials, which stimulate them to discuss and keep abreast of current affairs in France and French-speaking countries. Although information and communication technology is not used in lessons, some students use the computers in the library to research topics on the Internet; there were also many examples of students word-processing their written tasks. The department has the services of a French assistant, who provides small-group and individual oral practice. Students said they enjoyed and appreciated this extra opportunity.
159. The co-ordinator for French has recently resigned. The department has no handbook and very little documentation to co-ordinate the work of teachers and assist staff new to the department. Policies and procedures are not written down. There is no scheme of work, even though the production of a scheme was a priority in the departmental development plan at the beginning of the year. The development plan itself is vague and has only a limited effect on the work of teachers. However, the experience and enthusiasm of sixth form teachers means that the department has the capacity to improve management procedures in the future.
160. Many students have recently participated in an exchange with a French school near Paris, an experience that they found stimulating, and of benefit to their speaking and listening skills. The exchange will also take place this year.