

INSPECTION REPORT

NEWPORT GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL

Newport

LEA area: Telford and Wrekin

Unique reference number: 123561

Headteacher: Mrs. Edwina Gleeson

Reporting inspector: Ross Maden
2793

Dates of inspection: September 16th – 18th September 2002

Inspection number: 249760

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

© Crown copyright 2002

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Female
School address:	Wellington Road, Newport, Shropshire
Postcode:	TF10 7HI
Telephone number:	01952 811040
Fax number:	01952 820054
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. John Footner
Date of previous inspection:	February 24 th 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities (sixth form)	Aspect responsibilities (sixth form)
2793	Ross Maden	Registered inspector		Information about the school The school's results and achievements How well are students taught? How well the school is led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
11229	Mike Freeman	Lay inspector		Students' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
10417	Kevin Lambert	Sixth form co-ordinator	Physics	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
19414	Janet Flisher	Team inspector	English	
23324	Sylvia Greenland	Team inspector	Geography	
30518	Mike Johnson	Team inspector	Art and design	
13046	Mick Marks	Team inspector	Mathematics	

The inspection contractor was:

Power House Inspections

'Grasshoppers',
Anglesey Close,
Chasetown,
Burntwood,
Staffordshire
WS7 8XA

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

The Complaints Manager
Inspection Quality Division
The Office for Standards in Education

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
 ANNEX: THE SIXTH FORM	
 PART B: COMMENTARY	
 WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL	14
 WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	17
 WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	18
 PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	19
 PART D: THE SIXTH FORM	
 HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	25
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
 HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?	26
 HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS?	27
 HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?	27
Assessment	
Advice, support and guidance	
 HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND STUDENTS?	27
 HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	28
Leadership and management	
Resources	
 PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM	30

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Newport Girls is a community selective school educating girls in the age range of 11 to 18, There are 239 pupils, including 76 in the sixth form, in the school, which is smaller than the national average. The proportion of pupils' eligible for free school meals is 0.8 per cent, which is well below the national average. There are six pupils who have English as an additional language but none are at the early stage of learning the language. The school has increased in size since its previous inspection and plans to expand significantly from September 2003. The school predominantly draws its pupils from local primary schools in the Newport area but does attract pupils from the wider area of the County. There are no pupils in the main school who have statements of special educational needs which is low for a school of this size. Pupils' attainment on entry is well above the national average. Most pupils come from advantaged backgrounds.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an extremely effective school. All pupils are well motivated and keen to learn. There are few problems of behaviour or absenteeism. Teaching is consistently very good and virtually all pupils progress very well. The staff make challenging demands of pupils. There are very good arrangements to support all pupils and care for them and the school has a strong partnership with parents and carers. The school has very good leadership and management. It knows what it does well, where its weaknesses are and how to improve them. It has made a significant improvement since its last inspection and has sustained its outstanding academic standards. It provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- The very high standards pupils reach in external tests and examinations
- Teaching and learning are very good
- The excellent attitudes pupils have towards learning
- The high quality of relationships within the school
- The very high expectations for pupils to succeed

What could be improved

- Accommodation, in particularly for indoor physical education, art and design and music.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the school was last inspected in February 1997 there has been an improvement in standards achieved by pupils. The proportion of pupils reaching Level 6 in national tests at the end of Year 9 has increased for English and science and has been sustained for mathematics. 100 per cent of pupils gained five A*-C grades at GCSE in 1996 and this figure was maintained in 2001. There has been a significant improvement in the average points score achieved by students at A-level. In both 1996 and 2000 attendance was well above the national average. The quality of teaching has improved since the last inspection.

In tackling the key issues identified in the last inspection report, the governors have made good progress. There have been improvements in the monitoring and evaluation of the work of departments. The quality of personal, social and health education has improved. There is a more efficient use made of information and communication technology (ICT) to support teaching and learning and there have been improvements made in reporting pupils' progress to parents. The requirements to ensure that pupils receive a daily act of collective worship are still not fully met. Overall, the improvement since the last inspection is very good.

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
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	A*	A*	A*	A
A-levels/AS-levels	A*	A*	A*	

Key

top 5% nationally	A*
well above average	A
above average	B
average	C
below average	D
well below average	E

Pupils' results in national tests at age fourteen for the last four years have been in the top five per cent of schools nationally. The trend in the school's average points score was well above the national trend. In 2001 the proportion of pupils reaching Level 6 or above was very high for science, well above average for English but below average for mathematics when compared to the results in other grammar schools. In comparison with other grammar schools the proportion reaching Level 7 and above was very high for English, above average for science and in line for mathematics.

For each of the last four years the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A*-C has been in the top five per cent of schools nationally. Based on average points score results were very high. In 2001 the trend in the school's average points score was above the national trend. Based on their performance in Key Stage 3 tests and in comparison with other grammar schools results at GCSE were very high. Results in 2002 confirm the high standards the school achieves with 27 out of 34 pupils gaining five or more A* or A grades. In 2001 the average points score per student at A-level places the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally and reflects three years of consistent improvement. In 2001 100 per cent of students gained the higher grades of A and B in art and design and biology. French was the only subject where the average points score was below the national average. Standards in 2002 confirm the high standards the school achieves.

In 2001 the school exceeded its published targets for GCSE. Most pupils are working at or near their capacity and achieving very well in terms of earlier attainment, value added measures and comparisons with similar schools.

Standards in English are very high. Pupils are articulate and very confident speakers in both formal and informal situations. They listen carefully to others and contribute thoughtfully to discussions. In their reading pupils respond sensitively to a wide range of challenging texts. They recognise and can comment on how authors achieve their effects and are able to support a personal response with apt reference to the text. Pupils apply their knowledge and understanding in their own writing, which is fluent, coherent and controlled. They take great care and pride in the presentation of their written work, using a very good range of vocabulary and structures to engage and interest the reader.

Pupils' numeracy skills are very highly developed. They enter the school well able to carry out complex calculations both written and mentally. As they progress through the school they are taught well to use and improve their number skills in a variety of context and situations. Pupils can construct a wide range of graphs and charts and interpret their meaning. The school has

made good progress since the last inspection on ensuring that teachers are using ICT to support teaching and learning.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent; pupils are well motivated, eager to learn and work hard.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is excellent, with no exclusions for many years. This outstanding behaviour contributes substantially towards the overall success of the school.
Personal development and relationships	The personal development of pupils is very good and the school is very effective in this area of work. Relationships are very good throughout the school
Attendance	Attendance is very good and is well above the national average. Registers are marked promptly and meet legal requirements. Punctuality to lessons is very good.

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.

There has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. The teaching of skills and subject matter is knowledgeable and makes high intellectual and creative demands on pupils to take their learning further. Challenging questions are used to consolidate, extend and verify what pupils know and understand. The teaching methods adopted ensure the most productive use of the time available and the pace of working is high. Relationships in the classroom provide a confident and positive atmosphere in which achievement flourishes. Pupils are keen to learn, rise to challenges and maintain their concentration throughout lessons. They work well for extended periods of time and, as a result, gains in knowledge and understanding are very high. The quality of marking pupils' work is thorough and detailed and ensures that all pupils know what they need to do to achieve the highest possible grades. The quality of teaching and learning for English, mathematics and science is very good.

There is a consistent quality of teaching across all subjects and across all year groups. The needs of higher attaining pupils are fully met although a minority of pupils suffer from low confidence because they are comparing their performances with other pupils in the class and do not recognise their high levels of achievement in relation to national standards.

Teaching of the skills of literacy and numeracy is very good. As pupils move through the school they are encouraged to become increasingly independent and to think for themselves. There is a good use of ICT to support teaching and learning.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a very good broad and balanced curriculum, which meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	There are no pupils in the main school with special educational needs.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	There are six pupils with English as an additional language. All are bilingual and their literacy skills are excellent. The rich linguistic environment in English lessons supports their continuing language development. The progress these pupils make matches and often exceeds the progress made by other pupils in the school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The provision for pupils' moral and social development is very good. Provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The pastoral care and welfare provisions are good and continue to be a strength of the school appreciated by parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides very good leadership and management. She is well supported by the two deputy headteachers and those staff with posts of responsibility.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	The governing body is good in fulfilling its responsibilities with the exception of ensuring that all pupils receive a daily act of collective worship.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The work of the school is rigorously monitored and evaluated by the headteacher and senior staff. The results from evaluating the work of the school are effectively used to inform the priorities within the school development plan.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very good use of its limited resources. Staffing is a strength of the school but there are weaknesses in the accommodation. As reflected in the latest auditor's report the management of the finances is very good.

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 children to work hard • Teaching is good • They are kept well informed on their child's progress • Behaviour in the school is good • Their child is making good progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of activities outside lessons • The right amount of work to do at home • The school working more closely with parents • The school helping their children to become mature and responsible

Inspectors agree with parents on the issues which please them most. Inspectors disagree with parents about homework. Inspectors judge that the amount of homework set is appropriate for pupils of this age but acknowledge that some pupils spend considerably more time than is required on homework because of their interest in the work and in their determination to strive for excellence. Inspectors judge that the range of activities outside lessons is appropriate for a school of this size. The number of pupils participating in musical activities is disappointing. Inspectors agree with parents and the school recognises that there are areas in which the school can work more closely with parents. However, the partnership with parents is very good and most parents are very supportive of the school. Parents receive good, relevant information on their children's progress. Inspectors judge that the school is very effective in helping their children to become mature and responsible.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form at Newport Girls High School is much smaller than average (76 students compared to the national average of 166). However this shows a significant increase on the previous year largely due to a number of post GCSE students from other local schools joining the sixth form in September 2002.

All students follow an academic course in a range of AS and A-level subjects. Links exist with a nearby college to extend the range of subjects on offer. All students enter the sixth form with high grades in several GCSE subjects.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form is very successful. AS and A-level results are not only very good but also demonstrate very good progress resulting from very good teaching and learning. The sixth form caters well for its students and provides a good environment for their personal development. Leadership of the sixth form is very good and contributes to the improving standards. In spite of the small group size in a number of subjects, the sixth form provision is very cost effective.

Strengths

- Very high academic standards
- Students' excellent attitudes towards learning
- Very good teaching and learning
- Very good progress made by students

What could be improved

- Accommodation notably in dining and recreation areas, art and design and the library
- Careers guidance interviews
- Resources in the library

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Very good. Standards are very high and students' achievements are very good. Students learn very well because teachers' knowledge of the subject is very good. Students are highly motivated and eager to succeed. They have excellent attitudes towards their work.
Physics	Very good. Students' attitudes to learning and good teaching contribute to high standards and results which are well above the national average. Very good use is made of ICT,
Art and design	Excellent. Results are significantly above the national average. Students are achieving well as a result of excellent teaching. The quality of

	teaching and learning is excellent.
Subject area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Geography	Very good. Very good teaching, management and students' attitudes lead to well above average results. There is potential for increasing the use of ICT and fieldwork and improving access to ICT facilities.
English	Very good. Standards are very high in relation to national standards and the achievement of students is very good. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have excellent knowledge of their subject and lessons challenge students to make very good intellectual effort. The subject is very well led and managed.

Lessons in biology, business studies, chemistry and history were sampled. The quality of teaching in these lessons was always at least good and often very good and students are progressing well. In business studies the quality of teaching and learning is very good and standards are very high. Many students take part in Young Enterprise companies which is a highly successful extra-curricular activity. The personal development of many students is enhanced by their participation in sports leadership awards. Many sixth form students give of their time to coach and support younger pupils in sporting activities.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	The school cares for its students very well. Their academic progress, pastoral care and personal development are monitored and supported well. Higher education information and guidance is well organised and effective; opportunities for individual careers guidance interviews is less well developed.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	The effectiveness of leadership and management of the sixth form is very good. There has been a significant increase in the number of students entering Year 12 this year which enables a wider range of viable teaching groups to be formed. Changes in the timings of sixth form lessons enables students to pursue a wider range of curriculum subjects by following courses at New College. Opportunities for private study are restricted by weaknesses in the overall accommodation for the school. Books and up to date reference works for sixth form students within the library are inadequate.

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 choice of courses allows them to follow a programme suited to their needs and career aspirations • Teachers are accessible to help them if they have difficulties • The school helped them to settle well into the sixth form • They are well taught and challenged to do their best 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of careers advice • Outside of their main subjects the range of worthwhile activities and enrichment courses. • The school listening to and responding to the views of its sixth form students.

Students' views of the school are extremely positive and inspectors found support for these views. Students expressed concerns about careers education. They have access to good, well-chosen and comprehensive careers and higher education information and they find this very useful and relevant. However, whilst the higher education advice given them is very effective that for careers guidance is less effective. Inspectors judged that the range of worthwhile activities and enrichment courses was appropriate for a school of this kind. There are some concerns, especially from Year 13 students, about the level of independence allowed to students but the school has given this issue much serious consideration and inspectors judge that the level of independence is appropriate. Inspectors believe that the school does provide sufficient opportunities to listen to and respond to the views of its sixth form students.

COMPARING PROVISION IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES

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

PART B: COMMENTARY

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

The very high standards pupils reach in external tests and examinations

1. As a selective school the attainment on entry is understandably well above average. Most pupils at the age of 11 have levels of attainment, which are in line with the national average for pupils aged 14.

Key Stage 3 results

2. For each of the last four years the average points score for English, mathematics and science has been in the top five per cent of schools nationally. Results for 2002 show improvements in mathematics and science from the school's 2001 results. The trend in the school's average National Curriculum points for all core subjects is above the national trend.

3. In 2001 when compared with grammar schools, the proportion of pupils reaching level 6 or above was very high for science, well above average for English but below average for mathematics. The proportion reaching level 7 and above was very high for English, above for science and in line for mathematics. The average points score achieved in the tests were very high for English and well above for mathematics and science.

Key Stage 4 results

4. For each of the last four years the proportion of pupils gaining five or more GCSE grades A*-C has been in the top five per cent of schools nationally. Based on average points score results were very high. The trend in the school's average point score is above the national trend. Based on their performance in Key Stage 3 tests pupils' results were very high as they were in comparison with other grammar schools. In relative performance, results for geography and history were above results for other subjects.

5. Results for 2002 show that the average points score has increased from 69.6 in 2001 to 70.1. All pupils gained nine or ten GCSE grades A*-C and 27 out of 34 pupils gained five or more A* or A grades and one pupil gained ten GCSE A* grades. There were particularly very good results in geography, English language and literature, German and history.

Sixth Form results

6. In 2001 the average points score per pupil puts the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally. (31.7 compared with 17.7 nationally) and this represents three years of consistent improvement. 100 per cent of candidates in art and design and biology gained grades A-B. Only in French was the average points score lower than the national average. Students in 2002 reached an average points score of 31.5, which is slightly below the 2001 figure. The proportion of students gaining grades A or B was 60.4 per cent and in art and design the proportion was 100 per cent.

7. One outstanding feature of the school's examination results is the ability of pupils to exceed the predictions made on the basis of their prior attainment. So although pupils enter the school with high levels in National Curriculum tests at Key Stage 2 their performance in the tests at the end of Key Stage 3 exceed the predictions based on the Key Stage 2 data. A similar pattern emerges at GCSE where pupils reach standards well above those based on their prior attainment. In the sixth form predictions based on pupils' GCSE results are exceeded by the performance of students in their A-level results.

8. There are some clear features in the work of the school, which account for why the school is so effective in 'adding value' to pupils' prior attainments. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently very good. The attitudes of pupils' towards their learning are excellent. There is a very high degree of pupils being motivated to succeed. Pupils respond positively to the intellectual challenge provided by their teachers. The pace of teaching and learning is very high. This 'heady mixture' of factors accounts for why most pupils are working at or near their capacity and achieving very well in terms of their prior attainment.

The quality of teaching and learning is very good

9. At the time of the last inspection 70 per cent of lessons were judged to be good or better. This has improved to 97 per cent. During the last inspection the strength of teaching was strongest in Years 7 to 9. There is now a consistent strength in teaching throughout all years.

10. There are many factors, which account for why teaching and learning are consistently very good. Teachers' knowledge of the subjects they teach is very good. They are excellent in identifying for pupils what is needed to reach the standards for a Grade A* or A at GCSE. Consistently, across all subjects teachers have very high expectations. Teachers do not 'spoon feed' their pupils with knowledge but are constantly challenging them to think for themselves and the high quality of questioning enables teachers to test pupils' understanding of their work. The management of pupils is very good and little time is wasted on keeping control, which leads to a very high pace of working in all lessons. Stimulating and challenging teaching maintains pupils' level of interest in the lessons and produces excellent levels of concentration from pupils in meeting the challenges set. A particular feature of the teaching methods used is the opportunity to promote independent research. This is often a strong feature of the type of homework tasks, which are set to complement work started in class. Teachers encourage the use of ICT by pupils for research as was evident in the Year 8 science environment project. In several lessons, pupils leave the classroom to go to the library or the ICT room to use computers.

11. In English the quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 11 is very good. As they move through the school pupils are encouraged to become increasingly independent and to think for themselves. Teachers have very high expectations of their pupils. The rapid pace of lessons together with the rich linguistic and cultural environment in the classroom ensure that pupils make very good intellectual development and achieve very high standards.

12. In mathematics the quality of teaching and learning is very good. There is very good planning of lessons with clear objectives which enables pupils to build upon their previous work. There is a very good pace to lessons and skilful questioning makes pupils think carefully. At the end of lessons there is a very good summary, which consolidates the knowledge and skills learned.

13. In science the quality of teaching and learning is very good. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. A marked feature of science lessons was the way in which pupils develop a mature responsibility for their own learning. This was seen most clearly in a Year 8 lesson on pollution where, after a very brief teacher introduction, pupils moved to computers in different parts of the school to continue their research into their aspect of the topic. They remained on task throughout the lesson without the need for constant supervision from the teacher.

The excellent attitudes pupils have towards learning

14. In every lesson observed, bar one, inspectors judged that pupils' attitudes and behaviour were either very good or excellent. In two-thirds of lessons the judgement was that pupils' behaviour and attitudes were excellent.

15. In a Year 10 English lesson pupils were very well motivated and brought very good attitudes and behaviour to the lesson, which impacted positively on their learning. During group discussion in this lesson pupils worked well together annotating extracts and evaluating how well the authors achieve their effects, analysing linguistic structural and presentational devices with skill.

16. In a Year 11 lesson pupils' very positive attitudes produced a real atmosphere of intellectual study and pupils achieved very well because they are expected to learn for themselves. In mathematics lesson pupils liked the subject and enjoyed their work. They were keen learners and had very good attitudes to work allied to excellent behaviour. Year 7 pupils in a design and technology lesson were well motivated and remained on task throughout the lesson. There were similar features in ICT lessons in both Years 8 and 9 when pupils remained on task throughout the lesson without prompting from the teacher. Similarly, in a Year 9 history lesson, pupils were very well behaved and motivated to do well.

17. On the one occasion when pupils were noisy and not talking about the work a quick word from the teacher soon brought them back on task. All of this enables teachers to teach. They do not have to waste teaching time managing pupils' behaviour. Time in lessons is spent teaching and this contributes to a very good pace to learning and to pupils making very good progress.

The high quality of relationships within the school

18. Relationships in the school are based on mutual respect. It is evident that most pupils respect their teachers and recognise their efforts in helping them to succeed. In turn it is equally evident that teachers respect the pupils they are teaching and enjoy the intellectual challenge of stretching pupils to their full potential. The level of questioning by teachers in lesson is very good. They fully challenge their pupils and value the responses and contributions that pupils make. They do not put pupils 'down' if an answer is incorrect which in turn ensures that pupils have a high level of confidence in making contributions during lessons. A feature of all lessons is the keenness of pupils to respond to teachers' questions.

19. Relationships between pupils are very good. They show genuine appreciation when classmates achieve well and are very supportive to each other. They work very well together and enjoy the intellectual debate and discussion, which features in many lessons.

The very high expectations for pupils to succeed

20. There is a very clear and shared commitment by pupils, teachers and parents that pupils in the school come to school to work hard and if they work hard they will succeed. Most pupils are working at or near their capacity and achieving very well. They show a desire not just to pass examinations but to pass the examinations with the highest possible grades. Teachers are knowledgeable and skilful in identifying what pupils need to do to achieve the highest grades and this is matched by the commitment of pupils to reach these standards. Pupils are strongly committed to responding to every challenge put before them and show a real interest and desire to learn.

21. Most pupils, but not all, manage effectively the pressures placed upon them and control the use of the time they spend on their studies. Some pupils spend considerably more time on their homework than is set by their teachers because of their commitment and determination to achieve the highest possible standards. Some pupils are often disappointed that the efforts they have made have not been adequately reflected by their teachers' assessments and similarly some pupils unduly concentrate on comparing their performance with those of their classmates rather than in relation to national standards. For example, Year 11 pupils had completed design briefs for their GCSE graphic design course. These had been accurately assessed by the teacher and returned to pupils with individual detailed guidance on how these projects could be turned from a guaranteed grade B to achieving a Grade A* or A grade. The response from pupils to this guidance was mixed. Some were understandably disappointed and frustrated that their considerable efforts had not already achieved the highest grade and others ignored the frustration and just concentrated on how they could respond positively to the points raised to gain the highest grades.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Accommodation

22. In recent years the school has implemented effective improvements in the accommodation for design and technology and ICT. Overall the accommodation has significant inadequacies which impact on the standards pupils achieve. The facilities for indoor physical education are inadequate. The gym is too small for normal class sizes to practise and develop their skills. Conditions are too cramped for dance and badminton.

23. The gym is also used as the school hall for assemblies and productions. When the whole school is gathered for assemblies there is insufficient space for all pupils to be seated on chairs. As the school expands in size from September 2003 the current hall will be inadequate to accommodate the whole school. Arrangements for eating lunch are inadequate. Pupils have to take their lunch into their form rooms to eat. Whilst teachers and pupils work hard to ensure that these rooms are clean for afternoon lessons the situation is not satisfactory. The sixth form has its own social base but they are the only year groups to have this facility. Opportunities are being missed to develop the opportunities for personal development at lunchtimes by the lack of a central dining area and the lack of social areas.

24. The library is well managed and is popular with pupils. Although the stock of books is good for a school of this size many books are old and there is a lack of up to date research books and resources to meet the needs of sixth form students. The size of the library is too small for a school of this size and the opportunities for private study are limited.

25. There are weaknesses in other areas of accommodation in the school. The art and design and music facilities are cramped and are too small for the number of pupils in many classes.

26. Much of the accommodation is in temporary buildings, which suffer from flat roofs, which are reported to leak when it rains. The heating is difficult to control in these buildings and it is reported that these rooms are too hot in the summer months and too cold in the winter months. In wet weather these rooms are hard to keep tidy as mud is brought into the rooms from pupils using uncovered walkways.

27. Some of these deficiencies, but not all, will be tackled by a major building programme due to start later this year to cater for the increased numbers of pupils starting in September 2003. The governing body needs to continue its efforts to work with the local education authority for improvements in the accommodation.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

28. The governing body should work with the local education authority to:

- (1) implement the plans to improve accommodation for the school and tackle the issues of:
 - The inadequate accommodation for indoor physical education;
 - The dining room;
 - Increase the accommodation for the library and private study
 - Improve the quality of accommodation for art and design and music
 - Social areas for pupils
 - Increase the proportion of permanent buildings on the site(Paragraphs:

Sixth form

- (1) Improving the accommodation for private study and for art and design and geography.
(Paragraphs:
- (2) Improving the careers guidance in the sixth form
(Paragraphs:
- (3) Improving the resources available for research in the library
(Paragraphs:

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 to 11	25
	Sixth form	19
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		28

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
--	-----------	-----------	------	--------------	----------------	------	-----------

Years 7 – 11

Number	0	15	9	1	0	0	0
Percentage	0	60	36	4	0	0	0

Sixth form

Number	1	10	8	0	0	0	0
Percentage	5	53	42	0	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	163	76
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	2	0

Special educational needs

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

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.7
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.0
National comparative data	1.1

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

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

	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	2001	0	32	32

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	31	30	32
	Total	31	30	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	97 (100)	94 (100)	100 (100)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	97 (97)	94 (100)	100 (100)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	32	32	32
	Total	32	32	32
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	65 (64)	68 (66)	64 (62)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	100 (100)	100 (97)	100 (100)
	National	31 (31)	42 (39)	33 (29)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	0	32	32

GCSE results		5 or more grades A* to C	5 or more grades A*-G	1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys	0	0	0
	Girls	32	32	32
	Total	32	32	32
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	100 (100)	100 (100)	100 (100)
	National	48 (47)	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	69.6
	National	39.0

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

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

Number of students aged 16, 17 and 18 on roll in January of the latest reporting year who were entered for GCE A-level or AS-level examinations	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	0	32	32

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	0	32	32
	Average point score per candidate	N/A	31.7 (27.7)	31.7 (27.7)
National	Average point score per candidate	N/A	17.7 (18)	17.4 (17.6)

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS examinations			For candidates entered for Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Male	Female	All	Male	Female	All
School	Number of candidates	N/A	32	32	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Average point score per candidate	N/A	31.7	31.7	N/A	N/A	N/A
National	Average point score per candidate	N/A	17.7	17.4	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	217	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	1	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)	16.82
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	13.4

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	3
Total aggregate hours worked per week	71.75

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	73.1
---	------

Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	25.3
Key Stage 4	17.5

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	877 521
Total expenditure	860 369
Expenditure per pupil	3 841
Balance brought forward from previous year	47 790
Balance carried forward to next year	64 942

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6.72
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4.8

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	194
Number of questionnaires returned	55

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	51	38	7	4	0
My child is making good progress in school.	60	32	4	2	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	63	31	2	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	49	22	0	0
The teaching is good.	42	53	5	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	48	46	2	2	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	42	44	8	2	4
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	85	15	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	25	50	16	4	5
The school is well led and managed.	48	37	2	2	11
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	53	30	11	4	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	20	42	16	18	4

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

29. The average A-level points score achieved by students at the time of the last inspection in 1996 was 26.7. By 2001 this had improved significantly to 37.7 which was nearly double the national average of 17.7 for girls and it is these results which places the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally and reflects three years of consistent improvement. In 2001 100 per cent of students gained the higher grades of A and B in art and design and biology. French was the only subject where the average points score was below the national average. Standards in the 2002 results confirm the very high standards the school achieves.

30. It is undeniable that the average attainment of students entering the sixth form is high but each year students gain results at A-level which are significantly above those predicted by their prior attainment. In comparison with other grammar schools students' results are very high. There are many factors which account for this. Students are very well motivated to achieve highly. Students work hard in their lessons and are conscientious in their assignments. In lessons students are fully challenged. Teachers are very knowledgeable about their subjects and of what students need to do to gain the higher marks of grades A and B. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The level of intellectual challenge in lessons is high and the pace of working is fast. Students have well-developed skills for working independently. They are interested in their lessons and have a fierce determination to succeed. Retention rates are very high for all courses. Key skills are effectively developed through general studies. Most students go on to follow degree courses at university.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

31. The attitudes to learning displayed by students are excellent. Students are well motivated and eager to learn. They work diligently and celebrate each others' efforts and successes. These positive attitudes contribute very favourably to the overall success of the school and enable students to get the most out of lessons.

32. Student behaviour is excellent. There have been no exclusions for many years and there is a total absence of bullying, racism and other inappropriate behaviour. Students are polite and helpful to each other and to adults. As noted in the previous report, this outstanding behaviour, coupled with excellent attitudes to learning, makes a significant contribution to the very high standards of achievement, and continues to be a tangible and notable strength of the school.

33. Students show very good relationships with each other and with adults. They possess high expectations that they will do well and the school constantly nurtures and reinforces these aspirations. Students are supportive of each other and take pleasure in each other's achievements. There is a fair range of opportunities to take responsibility, such as the school council, running the tuck shop, organising the house system and most students undertake such tasks. These activities contribute substantially to the very good personal development of students, helped by the wide range of other offerings and enhancements in the school, such as the Oxford Union debate, 'Engineers in Education' and the Christmas drama festival.

34. Attendance is very good and above the national average, with no unauthorised absences at all. The school has firm and effective policy of encouraging regular and complete attendance by students in order that they may get the best out of sixth form lessons

and facilities. Registers are taken in the morning and the afternoon. This rigorous attention to attendance and punctuality helps to encourage hard, productive work and self-discipline. Overall students are effectively developing skills which will be valuable to them on higher education courses.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

35. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is very good. Over half the lessons were judged to be very good or excellent and all lessons were judged to be good or better. Teachers display excellent subject knowledge and a very clear understanding of the requirements of the examination boards to enable students to reach the higher grades. This is reflected in the high quality of marking students' work. All sixth form teachers have very high expectations of their students. Lessons are conducted at a challenging pace and every encouragement is given to students to become independent in their thinking and intellectual enquiry.

36. In English lessons teachers maintain an appropriate balance between their own structured contributions and a seminar style using open-ended questions that allow students to explore and extend the breadth and depth of their understanding of literature. Students respond very well to this approach and achieve very highly. For example, Year 13 students describe with real enthusiasm their study in Year 12 of a range of modern novels that reflect Shakespearean themes and talk with authority and conviction about various critical approaches to textual analysis.

37. In mathematics teaching is very good. The main factors for this are that teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and are able to explain concepts well. In one further mathematics lesson involving calculating the shortest distance between two points, the teacher's clear explanation of the topic significantly aided the students' understanding and good progress was made.

38. In physics teaching is always at least good with very good relationships between teacher and students. Lessons are well planned and contain demanding and interesting activities that keep students' attention and give them confidence about their examination performance. The teacher shows a good knowledge of physics and uses resources well in lessons. A particular feature of the course is the very good use of ICT, which is being developed further with new equipment recently purchased by the department.

39. In art and design the quality of teaching is excellent. The art and design teacher has very good subject knowledge and technical skill. Expectations are always high and lessons have a very good pace. Project briefs are well designed and give clear focus to the students' work. They are informed of how work can be improved and theory and practical work are integrated most effectively.

40. In geography the very good standard of teaching is characterised by the high level of teacher's subject knowledge and excellent classroom organisation and management, which support very good learning. Homework is always well used to extend learning through reading and use of the Internet.

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

41. The curriculum is broad and balanced offering students a wide range of courses either in the school or with partner institutions. All students are taught religious studies hence statutory requirements are met, with the exception of providing a daily act of collective worship. The courses on offer meet the needs of the students very well. For example, in English, the syllabus has recently changed to provide much greater intellectual challenge and in mathematics students are offered courses in both mathematics and further mathematics. The range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities, considering the size of the school, are very good. There are a number of school teams, some students representing the county. In the arts, the school is currently rehearsing for a production of 'Much Ado About Nothing' and sixth form students organise the drama club. There are productive links with local schools, for example there is an active debating society with Adams Grammar School. The provision for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural developments is good.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

42. Assessment of students' work is very good. Students received detailed comments on their work and teachers are skilful in identifying what students need to do to gain the higher grades in their courses. The school makes effective use of a commercial system to identify targets for individual students based on their performance at GCSE. Most students exceed these target grades. The quality of information to parents on the progress students are making in the sixth form is of high quality.

Advice, support and guidance

43. Students receive very good care and welfare within the school. Child protection measures are good. The headteacher and the nominated person for child protection have received the appropriate training; however, not all staff have received a basic child protection training. Good regard is paid to health and safety in school, including first aid and fire precautions. Students receive very good personal support and guidance on to courses from their tutors and also through the well-planned personal, social and health education programme. There is much good and effective peer support amongst the students themselves. Higher education information and advice is well-structured, relevant and effective, with good, comprehensive careers and higher education information library providing excellent back-up. Individual careers guidance, as perceived by students is less satisfactory and merits further attention in the way it is planned and delivered. Very good systems are now in place for monitoring and maintaining the very good attendance of students. The school has instituted good systems of recording student progress, including well-planned and clear Records of Achievements. All of this well organised and effective pastoral care and welfare provision contributes greatly to the overall very good learning and teaching throughout the sixth form.

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

44. Parents are very supportive of the work of the school and recognise the very high academic standards that students achieve in the sixth form. The quality of information that parents receive on the progress that students are making towards their AS and A2 examinations is very good.

45. Most students have very positive attitudes towards the school although Year 13 students were less positive than those in Year 12 when judged by the responses to the questionnaire. Students who entered the school in the sixth form from other schools were impressed by the support they received and the welcome they received from staff and other students.

46. A significant number of students, particularly in Year 13 felt that the school did not listen to the views of the sixth form students. This was not borne out by discussions with individual and groups of students during the inspection week. One of the characteristics of teaching in the sixth form is that students are constantly being encouraged to debate and discuss and express their own views. Most students show a poise and confidence in their abilities to express their views. There are many opportunities both formally and informally for students to voice their opinions. The very high quality of relationships between students and their teachers positively encourages this. It is therefore difficult to reconcile their perceptions with those of the inspectors. It may be that Year 13 students are more critical because during the last year adherence to the dress code was more rigorously enforced than in recent years as was the monitoring of students during their private study periods.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

47. The effectiveness of leadership and management of the sixth form is very good. There has been a significant increase in the number of students entering Year 12 this year leading to a wider range of viable teaching groups to be formed. Changes in the timings of sixth form lessons enables students to pursue a wider range of curriculum subjects by following courses at New College. Recent changes in the sixth form have resulted in a closer monitoring of private study periods and in implementing the standards of the dress code.

48. The head of the sixth form has a clear vision for the sixth form's future development. She has a determination to raise standards whilst maintaining the supportive ethos and the quality of pastoral care both of which are strengths of the current provision. There is a good monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and of insisting on high standards within the sixth form.

49. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. Induction procedures for sixth form students are good. Transition from Year 11 into Year 12 is well managed. As a result of the guidance they receive, most students choose combinations of subjects, which are relevant to their preferences and aspirations. The quality of sixth form provision attracts most Year 11 pupils to stay on into the sixth form.

50. Financial planning, management and monitoring in the sixth form are good. Financial administration and monitoring are sound and day-to-day accounting procedures are efficient. The principles of best value are successfully applied. There is no subsidy of sixth form courses from the main school and the sixth form provides. The cost effectiveness of the sixth form is very good.

Resources

51. Opportunities for private study are restricted by weaknesses in the overall accommodation for the school. Books and up to date reference books for sixth form students within the library are inadequate. The library is cramped in the space available; the stock needs updating and expanding in quality, particularly in the reference works sector. The relatively narrow range of library books to support the A-level English literature course is supplemented by research on the Internet and access to the central school library services. The access to ICT to support teaching and learning in geography is limited.

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

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001 the latest year for which national comparisons are available.

GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Design and technology	1	100	N/A	100	N/A	4.0	N/A

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	9	100	87	78	43	8.0	5.8
Biology	4	100	88	100	34	8.5	5.3
Chemistry	5	100	90	60	43	7.2	5.9
Physics	5	100	88	80	40	8.4	5.7
Geology	7	100	90	71	30	8.3	5.2
Design and technology	3	100	91	67	30	8.7	5.4
Business Studies	7	100	92	86	32	8.6	5.5
Art and design	7	100	96	100	46	9.7	6.6
Geography	15	100	92	80	38	8.5	5.7
History	8	100	88	50	35	6.5	5.5
English literature	12	100	95	50	37	6.8	5.9
French	8	88	89	38	38	5.5	5.6
German	7	100	91	57	40	7.1	5.8
Other languages	1	100	93	100	56	8.0	6.8
General studies	32	100	85	66	30	7.8	4.9

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The inspection covered A-level and AS-level mathematics in the areas of pure mathematics and statistics. In further mathematics, the area of decision and discrete mathematics was covered. In science the focus was on physics although biology and chemistry were also sampled. One lesson was observed with an AS biology group which was much larger than in recent years. Students worked enthusiastically at a range of tasks carefully structured to ensure that their skills in the use of microscopes were enhanced. This work was to be followed up by a visit to an electron microscope in a local university college. Two lessons were also observed in Chemistry with Year 13. In a lesson on reaction kinetics students showed good practical skills in setting up a thiosulphate reaction although they were less confident with the ICT equipment they were using for the first time. In a revision lesson on naming organic compounds students worked well on identification and reactions although they had some problems with recollection of Year 12 work.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- Very high standards in all areas of mathematics
- Very good teaching
- Students' very good progress
- Students' excellent attitudes towards learning mathematics

Areas for improvement

- Ensure the very ablest students move more quickly onto harder questions

52. Overall the standard of work seen is very high. At A-level in mathematics and further mathematics, examination results are very high. At AS-level, examination results are high although a small minority of girls attained results that were lower than expected. Since the last inspection the percentage of pupils attaining A or B grades in A-level has risen from 80 per cent to 88 per cent.

53. The standard of work seen in lessons and over time in A-level classes in all topics is very high. For example in a pure mathematics lesson, students differentiated complex equations and they used their algebraic skills effectively when working on sequences. In AS-level statistics, pupils can work out mean and standard deviation and used these in a range of contexts. In further mathematics, students are very skilled in working with networks and applying their knowledge in new situations. Students are highly numerate and had no difficulty in using calculators or interpreting information from graphs and tables. There is a high retention rate between those taking As level courses in Year 12 with A2 courses in Year 13.

54. Taking account of the very high attainment of students on entry to the sixth form, the students' achievements are very good. The main reasons for this are very good teaching and the students' attitudes towards work are excellent. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and are able to explain concepts well. In one further mathematics lesson involving calculating the shortest distance between two points, the teacher's clear explanation of the topic significantly aided the students' understanding and good progress was made. In all lessons, students are highly motivated and very keen to learn. Teachers know their students well. Marking is of good quality, ensuring that students know what they need to do in order to improve. Teachers provide appropriate support to

students when it is necessary. The detailed planning is a strong feature of the department, on some occasions the very brightest students would benefit from attempting harder questions more quickly. All the good features mentioned above ensure that students learn mathematics very well and progress at a high rate throughout the sixth form. They acquire new skills and use them very effectively in a wide range of contexts.

55. There are good examples of students working well together, helping and supporting each other or working independently when it is appropriate. Work and notebooks are in very good order and enable students to revise very effectively. They are interested in their work and concentration levels are very high. In one double lesson (two hours), students were working as hard at the end of the lesson as they were at the start. This is because they enjoy their work and feel they have achieved something by the end of the lesson.

56. Leadership and management of sixth form mathematics are very good. There is a clear sense of purpose and teachers are very keen for the students to do well. Teaching is effectively monitored through the performance management processes. Regular meetings between staff ensure a consistent approach to teaching. Students who begin to fall behind are identified and given the necessary support to catch up. Mathematics is becoming more popular this year with a significant increase in the number of students choosing to study the subject.

57. There were no major areas of weakness identified in the last inspection. The good features that were identified are still good and although standards in A-level were high they have further improved.

Physics

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

Strengths

- Knowledgeable and enthusiastic teaching
- Very good relationships
- Students' achievements
- Learning resources well used

Areas for improvement

- Continue to extend the range of teaching strategies

58. Standards of attainment are very high with A-level grades for the last few years being well above the national average although student numbers have been small. In 2002 the results were again very good and comparison with GCSE points score with A-level grades showed good progress. The current A2 group is again small but there are much larger numbers on the AS course.

59. Inspection evidence suggests that the standards of work of students presently in Year 13 are equally high. Written work is of a very high standard. In a lesson on gravitational fields students discussed ideas such as black holes and then used spreadsheets to calculate the gravitational field at points between the earth and moon based on data from the Apollo mission. The much larger Year 12 group, very new to the course, found work on logarithmic scales difficult but in a lesson on the response of the human eye, students worked well individually and in pairs in exploring a range of optical illusions.

60. Teaching is always at least good with very good relationships between teacher and students. Lessons are well planned and contain demanding and interesting activities that

keep students' attention and give them confidence about their examination performance. The teacher shows a good knowledge of physics and uses resources well in lessons. A particular feature of the course is the very good use of ICT, which is being developed further with new equipment recently purchased by the department.

61. Students' attitudes are of a very high standard. They work very well individually or in groups and are ready to question ideas once they have grasped the broad concepts involved in the more abstract areas of the course. Teaching and learning in physics is enhanced by good use of resources.

62. The physics sixth form courses are well organised and managed. There is little opportunity for staff interaction with only one teacher of the subject. The assessment of students' work is very thorough and is used effectively to monitor students' performance and set targets for improvement. Marking is encouraging and gives good guidance on what students need to do to raise the standard of their work. There is a good physics laboratory with good and improving resources, particularly in ICT, and good technical support across the science department. Although A-level science results were praised in the last inspection standards in physics (and the other sciences) have improved even further.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on art and design.

Art and design

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

Strengths

- Teaching and learning are excellent: lessons are well planned with good integration of theory and practical work
- Teacher and students enjoy excellent relationships and students benefit from high levels of personal tuition and guidance
- Students share ideas freely and work very well together

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation is inadequate for courses with such diverse media choice

63. The 2001 examination results are significantly above the national average. 100 per cent of students entered for A2 gained grades A – B, with six students gaining A grades. The AS results had 100 per cent of students gaining grades A – B. In relation to their GCSE grades, all did as well or better than expected. The AS level examination results provide a good foundation for A2 study with the retention rate of students into the second year being very good.

64. The work of current students is well above average. In Year 13 students are achieving very well in relation to predictions based on their GCSE and AS results. Students speak eloquently and with confidence about their work and demonstrate very good knowledge and understanding. The working environment is stimulating with high quality of students' work on display. Excellent progress is evident in painting and direct observational study. Art and design sketch books show very good annotation and sometimes excellent understanding of compositional principles and techniques needed for development of coursework assignments. Students' independence and maturity enable them to manage their own studies in completing coursework and working towards examinations. Initially in Year 12, students sustain most of their interest and skills from their GCSE work. These high

standards are maintained and built on in the Year 13 A2 course and there is plenty of evidence from students' work that independent research skills are being well developed. In a Year 13 lessons students were able to present, disseminate and discuss how they arrived at their final choice of specialist projects. Excellent sharing of ideas and opinions on the influence of styles, genres and approaches to their own work and the work of other artists was evident. Progress was ensured by the challenging demands of the work and high levels of personal tuition and guidance.

65. The quality of teaching is excellent. The art and design teacher has very good subject knowledge and technical skill. Expectations are always high and lessons have a very good pace. Project briefs are well designed and give clear focus to the students' work. They are informed of how work can be improved and theory and practical work are integrated most effectively. All students speak well of the support provided and state that their work was monitored thoroughly. Assessment criteria are well defined and deadlines for the completion of work are made very clear. Visits to galleries, locally and in London, have extended students' knowledge of art and design, including aspects of contemporary practice. Commitment to extra curricular experiences, including life classes, are some of the factors contributing to the success of the department.

66. The sixth form courses run most effectively. The department is led and managed very well. The use of ICT for research is evident. There is a lack of technical assistance to support the teaching of such a range of media activities. The present accommodation is inadequate for courses with such a range of media choice and hence inhibits further potential expansion. For the development of students' three-dimensional skills, facilities and provision for work using clay are insufficient. The library provision for good quality reference books is satisfactory, meeting some of the elements of knowledge and understanding needed for a subject with such a wide cultural base. Improvements since the last inspection have been excellent as a result of clear leadership and excellent teaching. Overall this is a most successful area of sixth form provision and it is becoming increasingly popular.

HUMANITIES

The focus of this report was on geography but one lesson was observed in Year 12 history where students showed considerable knowledge and understanding of Henry VII's claim to the throne.

Geography

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

Strengths

- Excellent A-level results
- Very good management which provides a secure framework for learning
- Very good assessment and analysis of students' performance
- Very good standards of teaching and learning

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation, particularly storage space and furnishings
- Better access to computers in the department
- More opportunity for local fieldwork investigations

67. Standards of attainment are very high due to the high standard of students' attainment at GCSE and the very good teaching they receive. In 2001 A-level results were well above

average, in the top five percent nationally. Results were above the average for other subjects in the school and were above expectations based on previous GCSE grades. In 2002 A2 results were lower than in previous years but were above expectations for that particular cohort of students. AS results for 2002 are not yet available because all modules have not yet been completed but grades so far, and the standard of coursework being produced, indicate that attainment will be above or in line with expectations for these students. The numbers enrolling for sixth form geography are now higher than in previous years and the group sizes are viable. All but one student from last year's AS course have continued to the A2 course.

68. The standard of work of current students is also well above average. The work of Year 13 students indicates that they are achieving very well, learning quickly and effectively because of the clarity of their teaching and their keen interest in the subject. In a very well structured lesson about the causes of tropical climates they mastered complex concepts and related them to actual weather events as viewed the previous day from outer space. However, although they are well grounded in theory and case studies they have some difficulty in relating these to what they actually see around them, because they do not have sufficient practice making observations in the field and collecting their own data.

69. Year 12 students have only just started their course and are working hard to master the new level of work required. They were successful in revising previously learned hydrological concepts and applying them to the Severn Valley. Their very good attitudes ensure that they are making very good progress but at present they are hesitant in giving their opinions in class discussion, which slows the development of ideas and independent learning. The very good standard of teaching is characterised by the high level of teacher's subject knowledge and excellent classroom organisation and management, which support very good learning. Homework is always well used to extend learning through reading and use of the Internet.

70. The co-ordinator manages the department very well with all documentation in place and a continuous cycle of self-review. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good with previous high standards of teaching and learning maintained. However, although use of ICT has been expanded into all areas of the curriculum it is still restricted because of a lack of dedicated computers in the department, and this was seen to constrain the work of a few students. Assessment and analysis of student progress are well established and enable the co-ordinator to be constantly aware of the needs of all students.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on English.

English

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

Strengths

- Students achieve very high standards. The proportion of students gaining A or B grades this summer has shown a marked increase.
- The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers know their subject very well and lessons are stimulating and challenging.
- Students learn very well. They respond to challenging texts with enthusiasm.
- The subject is very well led and managed.

Areas for improvement

- The range of books in the school library to support the A-level course is relatively narrow.

71. AS and A2 courses are offered in English Literature. There are currently 14 students in Year 13 and 27 students in Year 12 studying the subject.

72. A-level examination results in 2001 were well above average. All students who took the examination gained at least a pass grade and the proportion gaining the higher grades A and B was 50 per cent, well above the average. These results maintained the high standards of previous years. These standards have been significantly exceeded in 2002 when the proportion achieving Grades A and B was 80 per cent and almost all students performed better than expected.

73. The work seen during the inspection confirms these excellent standards. The vast majority of students start the course having gained A* to B grades in GCSE and they continue to make very good achievement throughout the course. In lessons students are encouraged to develop a personal response to literature. The quality of their perceptions and insights into literature is impressive and they employ a wide range of critical and evaluative vocabulary to explore and explain their opinions and ideas. Early in Year 12, students already show a good grasp of the themes of their set texts and the way these are conveyed through character and language. In a lesson on 'Hamlet', students contributed thoughtfully to a discussion about characters' relationships and motivation. They demonstrated excellent understanding both of the context in which Shakespeare was writing and of the way in which our own culture affects our interpretation of the play. Another group at an early stage in their study of 'Hard Times' was able to identify Dickens's point-of-view and how he uses linguistic and structural features to convey this to the reader.

74. By Year 13 students have a highly developed sense of the cultural, social and historical context of literary texts. In lessons studying 'The Tempest' and Friel's play 'Translations', discussion ranged over such topics as reconciliation, colonisation, order and power and students were able to identify and explore links between the texts at an impressive level. This level of understanding is also reflected in their written work. All students are able to express and explain their ideas coherently and in depth. Course work essays demonstrate a confident and individual critical voice and a fluent, polished style.

75. Students respond very positively to demanding work and make very good intellectual effort both in discussion and in their written work. Their personal reading encompasses a wide range of quality texts and critical works. Their files contain very detailed personal notes on their set texts and are very well organised.

76. The teaching of A-level English Literature is very good. Teachers display excellent subject knowledge and very high expectations of their students. Lessons are conducted at a challenging pace and every encouragement is given to students to become independent in their thinking and intellectual enquiry. Teachers maintain an appropriate balance between their own structured contributions and a seminar style using open-ended questions that allow students to explore and extend the breadth and depth of their understanding of literature. Students respond very well to this approach and achieve very highly. For example, Year 13 students describe with real enthusiasm their study in Year 12 of a range of modern novels that reflect Shakespearean themes and talk with authority and conviction about various critical approaches to textual analysis.

77. Students speak warmly about their teachers' level of commitment. Teachers operate an open door policy and respond to students' needs. For example, some current Year 13 students who were new to the school at the start of Year 12 described appreciatively the way in which the department put on extra lunchtime sessions for them when they were finding poetry analysis difficult. The content and structure of each module, the assessment objectives and marking criteria are shared with students and in this way they are made real partners in the learning process. After each major essay students receive individual tutorials when targets for future improvement are set and they value the way this keeps them informed about their progress.

78. The subject is very well led and managed. The head of department, who has been in post just over one year, has improved provision through the introduction of a course to develop higher order skills and by changing to a more challenging A-level syllabus. She ensures that the relatively narrow range of library books to support the A-level course is supplemented by research on the internet and access to the central library services. The work of the department is thoroughly monitored and evaluated to ensure that students receive a valuable and enriching experience.