

INSPECTION REPORT

NEWSTEAD WOOD SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Orpington

LEA area: Bromley

Unique reference number: 101671

Headteacher: Mrs E Allen

Reporting inspector: Carol Worthington
20609

Dates of inspection: 2nd – 5th December 2002

Inspection number: 249793

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Selective grammar
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Female
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Chairman of governors:	David Hughes
Date of previous inspection:	29 th April 1996

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	4 - 7
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	8 - 10
PART B: COMMENTARY	
WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL	11 - 16
WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED	16
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	17
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	18 - 23
PART D: THE SIXTH FORM	24
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	24
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?	24 - 25
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO STUDENTS?	25
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?	25
Assessment	
Advice, support and guidance	
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS AND STUDENTS?	25
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	26
Leadership and management	
Resources	
PART E: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN	

**AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES
IN THE SIXTH FORM**

27 - 43

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Newstead Wood is a highly selective grammar school in Orpington attended by girls aged between 11 and 18 from a variety of backgrounds within a nine mile radius. The school roll is 939 – about the same as in other secondary schools. The school is oversubscribed; there are six applicants for every place. Less than one per cent is eligible for free school meals, which is well below average. Less than eight per cent of girls have English as their second language; none is at an early stage of acquisition. Eighty per cent of pupils are white, and twenty per cent of these are not British. Other girls are from black, Chinese and other Asian backgrounds. Just over one per cent of girls is on the special needs register, mainly because of emotional and behavioural difficulties. None has a statement. This is well below the national average. Attainment on entry to the school is well above average.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an outstandingly successful school which has many excellent features. Standards are very high and improving yearly as a result of very good teaching. The headteacher gives excellent leadership and the school seeks constant improvement. Girls are given a very rich curriculum which nurtures all aspects of their development; they have excellent attitudes to learning. The school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Academic standards are very high in all subjects.
- Pupils have excellent attitudes to their studies.
- Teaching is very good and sometimes excellent.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- The school makes outstanding provision for its gifted and talented pupils.
- The school enriches its curriculum with an excellent range of extracurricular activities.

What could be improved

- There are no key issues. The school has already identified areas for refinement in its current development plan concerning teaching methods, time allocation and subject provision in the curriculum, which it should continue to address.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in April 1996, since when it has effected good improvement overall. Examination results at that time were below one hundred per cent A*- C grades at GCSE but are now exactly so, and results in Key Stage 3 National Curriculum tests are very high all round, representing good improvement. There has been a significant rise in the standard of teaching, with 98 per cent of lessons observed in this inspection good or better. Attitudes were very good and are now excellent. The curriculum, including provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is now very good. Of the key issues identified in the last report, all have been completely addressed. The facilities for information and communication technology (ICT) have improved and computers are used in most subjects, although more use could be made on certain sixth form courses. Statutory requirements for religious education in the sixth form are now met. Improvements in accommodation identified in the last report have been completed.

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*	

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

The school's performance in GCSE and AS/A-level examinations is very high, and in the top five per cent of the country. This represents very good achievement, since on entry, pupils are in the top eight per cent of ability. Compared with similar top girls' schools, Newstead also does well, achieving results equivalent to or higher than these in most subjects. In National Curriculum tests for 14 year-olds, the school's results are also in the top five per cent of the country for the core subjects English, mathematics and science. Compared with the results in similar schools, results for mathematics are particularly impressive, with many pupils attaining at exceptionally high levels. In English and science, attainment is slightly lower; girls are not put in for the extension papers to level 8 in these subjects. The school's results have been similarly very high for the last four years; the target of 100 per cent A*-C grades for GCSE is nearly always met. Work seen during the inspection in English, mathematics and all three sciences was of a similar standard, and similarly high in other subjects sampled in the curriculum.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Excellent. Pupils come to school wanting to succeed in all aspects of school life and this makes a very strong contribution to their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Excellent in all aspects of school life. There have been no exclusions.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Girls respond very well to the very many and varied opportunities provided for personal development. Relationships are very good throughout the school.
Attendance	Very good. Well above average attendance contributes well to the progress girls make.

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.

The quality of teaching is very good throughout the school; 60 per cent was very good or better in Years 7 to 11. In the sixth form, 72 per cent was very good and 19 per cent was excellent. The main strengths in teaching are teachers' expertise, which is high in all subjects, planning, very high expectations and the pace of lessons. Although many lessons demonstrated a good variety of teaching methods, there were some in which teachers' direction of pupils was too instructive and did not invite or expect contributions from them. The school has identified this and is currently investigating teaching as part of its development plan. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is a major strength and underpins progress in all other subjects. Information and communication technology skills are also taught to a high level and used very well as a curriculum tool. The teaching of mathematics in sets enables the needs of all pupils to be met, but in languages where new girls have had a greater variety of experience, they are not set, which may adversely affect the rate of progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The high quality provision of academic subjects suits the demands of all these intelligent girls. The range of extracurricular and enrichment activities is excellent. There is some imbalance in the curriculum, mainly to do with science, languages and option choices; the school is investigating this as part of the current development plan.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good. The few with specific language and emotional problems are very well provided for. All their teachers know them well, and plan specifically for their needs.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good. Such pupils are doing just as well as other girls.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Provision for spiritual development is good, particularly through music, English and religious studies, but could be improved in assembly by more provision for silent reflection and more commitment to singing by the whole school. Provision for moral, social and cultural education is very good in all aspects of school life.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Provision for health, safety and pupils' welfare is good. The very good assessment, support and guidance in the pupils' academic work make a very strong contribution to standards.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher has excellent vision for the development of the school and is a very good manager of people. With very good support from her deputy and other senior staff, she sets a very clear direction for the school's further improvement, ensuring it does not rest on its laurels. Leadership and management are very good in all departments sampled.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Very good. Governors are committed and supportive. They have become more informed and knowledgeable over the past year, and are now much more actively engaged in the development and improvement of the school through strategic planning with senior management.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good evaluation of the school by the headteacher in her first year has identified several key areas for development. The school has involved staff, governors, girls and parents in forming its vision for the future.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school makes very effective use of all its resources in the pursuit of even higher standards. Decisions about spending are considered very carefully to ensure that they relate closely to the school's stated educational priorities and the best value is obtained.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extraordinarily high standards. • Their daughters have fun in school. • Very good teaching. • The opportunity to do short courses in design and technology and ICT in Year 9. • Very good leadership and management. • High expectations. • The range of extracurricular activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The large amount of homework set. • The amount of perceived pressure in mathematics. • Teachers seem to have little idea of what each child can do, taking them 'en bloc' as very bright. Some girls are de-motivated if everyone else is better at a certain subject; teachers do not seem to notice. • Time management of homework and projects - all teachers want their subjects attended to first. • Arrangements for parents' meetings.

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views. The amount of homework set was not found to be too onerous considering the nature of this school. Many girls were asked about the amount of homework they have to do, and the vast majority said they did not find it a problem, provided they were well organised. There is a timetable given to all girls which indicates when major pieces of coursework, for example, are due in, and it is possible for girls to plan around it. Teachers do differentiate within the range of ability and most plan well, using individual education plans, if applicable. Inspection evidence from discussion with a substantial number of girls shows that the setting arrangements in mathematics are most effective and do not exert too much pressure on those who are not quite as able as the really gifted ones. Moreover, girls said that they expected pressure, but if they are organised they cope well enough. Setting arrangements could be applied to other subjects, particularly modern languages, to ensure equal access to the curriculum for all girls. A parent/teacher meeting took place during the course of the inspection. It was very well organised.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is larger than that at most other schools, having 265 girls. Its composition is similar to that of the main school in respect of ethnic grouping and backgrounds. All girls follow AS level courses in Year 12 and A-level courses in Year 13. There are no vocational courses. The majority of Newstead girls continue into the school's sixth form, but a few prefer to go elsewhere, and there are about 25 places for girls from other schools. Entry requirements are well above average as all girls are required to have passed six GCSE subjects at grades A*-C, and new entrants are required to have at least B grades in their chosen AS level subjects. There is great competition for these few places.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

The sixth form provides a very good quality of education with many excellent features. It is cost effective and gives very good value for money. The standard of teaching is very good and often excellent, and the provision for academic and personal development is exceptionally good. Academic standards are very high and represent very good achievement.

Strengths

- Standards in all subjects are very high at AS and A-level.
- Girls have excellent attitudes to their work.
- Teaching is very good and often excellent.
- The curriculum is enriched with an excellent range of extracurricular activities.
- Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is very good.
- Provision for the gifted and talented is very good.
- Girls are given very good and often excellent guidance to reach the highest standards.

What could be improved

- The school should address the same issues of teaching methods identified in Years 7 to 11 and ensure there is more extensive use of ICT.

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

THE QUALITY OF PROVISION IN INDIVIDUAL CURRICULUM AREAS

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

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Mathematics	Very good. Very high standards are achieved. Teaching promotes very good learning through teachers' excellent expertise and very high expectations. A greater range of teaching styles would allow girls more scope in learning.
Chemistry	Very good. Very high examination results are achieved by girls through very good teaching and monitoring of their attainment and progress.
Physics	Very good. Well above average standards are achieved; girls make very good progress as a result of very good teaching and assessment procedures.
Psychology	Very good. Standards are consistently well above average because of well planned lessons and very clear guidance by dedicated teachers.

Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
Design and technology	Very good. Examination results are very much higher than average because of the enthusiastic and challenging teaching.
Economics	Very good. Standards are well above average. Girls achieve very well because of the very good teaching based on very good subject and examination knowledge.
Art and design	Very good. Attainment is very high. The very good teaching methods secure the best from girls.
Drama	Excellent. Inspirational teaching and outstanding attitudes to the subject ensure that standards are consistently well above average.
Classical civilisation	Very good. Well above average examination results are achieved as a result of very good teaching and support for girls.
Geography	Excellent. Very high quality support by dedicated specialist teachers results in standards consistently well above average.
History	Excellent. Standards are very high as a result of excellent teaching and girls being encouraged to undertake independent research.
English	Very good. Well above average examination results are achieved as a result of very good and enthusiastic teaching. Teaching styles are sometimes too didactic.
French	Very good. The very good teaching leads to high student motivation and very good standards.

Provision was sampled in a few other subjects. In the lessons observed, teaching and learning were excellent in biology and music and very good in ICT. They were good in Latin and general studies.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very good. Girls from Year 11 and other schools are prepared carefully for entry to the sixth form, and the very good guidance and support continue through Years 12 and 13. The choice of courses is matched well to girls' aspirations and capabilities. Assessment is rigorous and used well to set suitably challenging targets for academic and personal development. Girls have regular discussions with their subject and form tutors about their progress, and their work is marked meticulously with constant encouragement towards the achievement of high standards. The Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN), general studies and the enrichment programme equip girls with knowledge and skills to enable them to develop into informed and responsible young citizens. The general careers advice given is excellent for young people wishing to pursue academic studies; all girls are given individual guidance on their suitable career routes.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very good. The effective leadership and management of the sixth form make a substantial contribution to girls' very good achievements. Heads of department are very good managers and provide good resources, although the use of ICT could be improved in several subjects. The head of sixth form, together with the rest of the senior management team, has identified through monitoring that teaching methods could match the needs of girls better in some subjects and that there is a need to examine the curriculum provision to give more time to subjects, particularly at AS level. The governors recognise the sixth form as a

	strength and a key priority for development, and have approved funds for development of the sixth form accommodation and the development of e-learning.
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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 subjects suits talents and aspirations. • Extracurricular activities. • It is a good place to work. • They are well taught and helped to study independently. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The pressure exerted to achieve the highest academic standards, which can be excessive with five AS level subjects in Year 12. • Support from teachers, their assessment of work and information about progress. • Careers advice for those not going to university. • Pastoral care.

Inspectors confirm the views of the large majority of girls that the quality of education is very good in the sixth form, and support the positive views girls expressed. The pressure exerted for girls to achieve the highest academic standards is great for those taking five AS level subjects, but only the most able. Support from teachers is mostly very good, and all girls are given opportunities for one-to-one tutorials. Careers advice is superb for university entrance; inspectors found that all girls receive individual careers guidance, including those wishing to follow a vocational route. Pastoral care has improved since the headteacher took up office, and subject teachers now acknowledge its importance.

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 girls achieve

1. The school provides education for girls who are capable of the highest achievements. Places are at a premium and taken by the top eight per cent of the ability range. Standards of work in Key Stage 3 tests, GCSE examinations and in AS and A level examinations place the school in the top five per cent of the country. Newstead Wood is regularly amongst the top ten performing schools nationally.
2. In the national tests for English, mathematics and science in 2002, the majority of Newstead girls achieved level 7 (82 per cent in English and 70 per cent in science); the nationally expected level is 5. The results in mathematics were particularly outstanding: 99 per cent achieved level 7 or above and over half achieved the extension level 8. The top five per cent achieved the 'exceptional performance' rating. Girls are not entered for extension papers in English and science.
3. In the foundation subjects the average level attained in Years 7 to 9 represents very high achievement. Standardised teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 showed many girls at level 7, with a very significant proportion of girls achieving level 8 in design and technology, geography, history, and information and communication technology (ICT).
4. In GCSE, standards are similarly very high compared with those in all schools. Virtually all girls achieve 100 per cent A* - C passes in all subjects they take. D grades were gained in 2002 by fewer than three girls in the sciences, geography, German, physical education and religious studies, because of absence through illness during the year. At AS and A-level, the standard is also very high.
5. Standards of work seen during the inspection were very similar to those indicated by examination results. In all the subjects sampled, they were at least well above average, and in English, mathematics and science, very high in Key Stages 3 and 4. In all three subjects the standard of work is at GCSE level by Year 9.
6. In English, writing is imaginative, well developed and expressive, as seen in the empathetic writing based on 'Roll of Thunder, Hear my Cry' at Key Stage 3. Pupils' use of vocabulary is vivid and precise, and grammatical structure mature and varied. However, some incorrect use of the apostrophe was seen, even in a newsletter written by girls and offered for sale. In Key Stage 4, personal and narrative essays are particularly mature and expressive. Essays on 'Macbeth' contained cross-reference, and consideration of the social context was made in work on 'Of Mice and Men'. Analysis and composition of modern poems are excellent, much aided by the 'writer in residence'. Girls in both key stages have developed very good note-taking skills which are used in all lessons. Presentation is very good. Pupils' reading is very mature; much work is based on literature and shows very good progress in the development of understanding and close reading. In Key Stage 4, literature is particularly challenging – girls read a great deal of Shakespeare, 'Lord of the Flies', 'Under Milk Wood' and much modern poetry.
7. In all lessons and in some of the many clubs and societies, girls are given excellent opportunities to engage in debate, mock trials and discussions in pairs and groups as well as a whole class. This successfully builds confidence and the ability to speak in public. In mathematics, standards seen were very high. Pupils manipulate algebraic formulae, use graphical methods to solve equations and use trigonometry and standard form. Data analysis is of a very high calibre and is applied very well in science, where standards are similarly very high. In Key Stage 3, much work is done at high GCSE level, for example diffraction and interference patterns in waves, whereas in Key Stage 4, some of the work is bordering on the standard required at AS level. The school is considering the reduction of Key Stage 3 to two years to enable pupils to tackle GCSE earlier and spend more time on the AS and A levels.

Attitudes, values and personal development

8. Pupils' attitude to their work is excellent. They value the many opportunities for learning, both in class and in the many activities in which they take part outside lessons. They engage very positively in lessons, concentrating hard on the tasks and participating in discussions whenever the occasion permits. From Year 7 onwards, girls are hardworking and diligent. They work consistently well during lessons and are very productive in the amount and quality of work they produce. Attendance is very good; girls are keen to come to school and, despite the distances many have to travel, are punctual or early. Girls' very mature approach to their work displays a high degree of self-reliance as they get older. They arrange their own work-shadowing, for example, and in the sixth form, follow up their own interests in the work of expert practitioners, such as artists, to further their own studies.
9. Girls make full use of the many opportunities for personal development offered by the school. They actively seek responsibility and support the work of many charities, very often organising events, such as cake sales, to be held at lunchtimes. The school encourages their competitive nature by holding lunchtime competitions, for example, for the best decorated form room. The form leaders take very good responsibility for their forms and the school council is very active in making decisions concerning school life.

The very good quality of teaching

10. Teaching is very good overall, with some excellent features. Forty-two lessons or part lessons were seen in Key Stages 3 and 4, 90 per cent of which were good or better, 60 per cent being very good or better. A major contributory factor is the expertise of teachers, the vast majority of whom are specialists in their particular subjects, very well qualified and able to communicate to the very high standard necessary to enable these very intelligent girls to succeed and gain even higher standards. In science, for example, the expertise of biologists, chemists and physicists was evident by the standard of teaching seen in all lessons. In a Year 9 chemistry lesson, the teacher constantly challenged girls' understanding of the displacement reactions of metals, enabling them to draw very good conclusions about the activity series of metals from their observations during the lesson and from their very good background knowledge.
11. Teachers have great enthusiasm for their subject. This was very obvious in a Year 7 mathematics lesson, where the teacher imbued the girls with excitement as she led them in describing rules of simple numerical sequences in a quick mental warm up. English teachers have very good understanding of Shakespeare's plays. Year 9 girls were studying 'Twelfth Night'; the teacher led them into recognition of the use of language to convey humour which enabled them to identify the use of puns and understand how humour is created. In practical subjects, teachers' own expertise is supplemented by that of specialist technicians. In an art lesson on the Henry Moore sculpture project, the teacher was supported by a specialist technician with particular proficiency in ceramics. The teacher successfully provided guidance on aesthetic aspects and the technician on the technical side, particularly on how to maintain the quality and form of the clay during the construction of sculptures. In science and design and technology, technicians play a valuable part in practical lessons, assisting individual girls in activities such as making microscope slides and using tools effectively.
12. Teachers' constant application of literacy in all areas of the curriculum enables girls to acquire a very good grasp of subject specific terminology, such as 'displacement' and 'activity series' in science, and of terms specific to Jewish, Christian and Buddhist religions in religious studies. Many teachers have welcomed the Key Stage 3 Strategy and are using it well in their work. Science teachers, for example, expect a high standard of numeracy, especially in data analysis. Information and communication technology is used well in most subjects, such as in the drafting of a novella in English, where pupils were exploring the use of exciting vocabulary.

13. Teachers have very high expectations of girls' work throughout the school, and work very hard to enable them to make constant improvement on their high attainment on entry to the school. This is evident in design and technology, where girls complete the GCSE course in Year 10 with some outstanding projects, as exemplified by the magnificent display of moving toys and clocks after the style of Mackintosh and Gaudi. In French in Year 9, the teacher's high expectations were revealed in the use of the language throughout the lesson. She encouraged girls to deduce the meanings of new vocabulary, and they were all keen to try because of her expertly differentiated questioning.
14. Teachers' planning is very good and matched to extend the learning of all pupils. It identifies small differences in the very high ability range present in the school. In a Year 8 mathematics set, for example, pupils with special educational needs were assisted in their learning by specific seating arrangements and by the teacher setting out clear and logical examples. All girls followed and used them to further their understanding of the order in which operations should be undertaken to solve problems. In a Key Stage 3 religious studies lesson, where 'good and evil' were being considered with relation to the Holocaust, an impressive variety of activities had been planned, including the use of textbooks, video, discussion and individual testimony, which all served to enable girls to consider the guidance of conscience, and human or demonic evil when drawing conclusions about the nature of humanity and, eventually, God.
15. Teachers' management of their pupils is excellent. In an English lesson, for example, the teacher's active, dynamic manner was instrumental in managing girls' contributions from brainstorming in small groups to whole class discussions very well as they compared poems from a GCSE set text to appreciate what makes a good poem. In physical education, teachers' very good organisation in volleyball groups enabled pupils to use the limited resources well and learn how to umpire successfully.
16. Most lessons proceed at a very brisk pace. In a Year 7 science lesson, for example, pupils were still donning their labcoats when the teacher started the first exercise. The high expectations enabled the girls in the first term of their secondary education to complete a large amount in the space of one lesson on the structure of cells, and to learn the differences between animal and plant cells. Homework was a consolidating extension of work begun in class, as it was in many lessons.
17. Teachers' assessment of their pupils' work is very thorough. Work is very well marked with written and verbal comments for improvement. Teachers know their pupils well and the pilot process to develop one-to-one tutorials and target setting in Year 7 is working extremely well. All teachers keep accurate records of girls' progress and make them available to other staff. If pupils fall behind in their work, there is immediate and well-focused support given by teachers during their free time. This ensures that all pupils learn well, and most do so very well. Homework is used successfully for girls to consolidate and extend their individual research. Girls are helped to plan and organise their own work, and to set targets. Sometimes the volume of homework is so great that log-jams occur, but girls said that if they were well organised, they had no real problems.

The very good leadership and management

18. Leadership and management of the school are very good overall. The headteacher, now in her second year of tenure, gives excellent leadership and has very perceptive vision for the further development of the school. She is also a very good manager of people, exemplified by the rearrangements of staff responsibility, particularly in ICT. The deputy head is also excellent and gives very strong support. These are very significant factors in ensuring the school's continued success and the impressive standards it achieves. Under her thoughtful and sensitive guidance, this excellent school is not resting on its laurels, but vigorously seeking to improve its performance. It is looking beyond academic standards to provide personal fulfilment in all aspects of school life, and to realise the very high expectation of staff, governors, parents and girls. The school has maintained the many strengths identified in its previous inspection report and has made very good improvement in all aspects.

19. The headteacher has rationalised the management structure of the school so that there is now a clearly understood system of line management. The senior management team now consists of the headteacher, her deputy and three assistant headteachers, all with clearly defined responsibilities. This ensures that their weekly meetings are efficient because a wide variety of school provision can be discussed in depth and effective action taken. The deputy head, now freed from overall responsibility for every department which she held for many years, is now able to diversify into considering various aspects of curriculum provision, particularly for the gifted and talented. Other major aspects, such as assessment and special needs, staff development and communication, provision for the sixth form, pastoral care and support, are now divided amongst the assistant headteachers. All senior management team members are committed to the school's success and work very hard to ensure it whilst maintaining a teaching role within the school.
20. The work of the governing body is very good. Governors have taken on a greater role in actively fulfilling their strategic responsibilities in the past year, based on much more work between the senior management team and committee members. They now have a greater understanding of school management, working in partnership with staff; they are more knowledgeable of curriculum issues. They are keen to do more, particularly in helping the school realise new building projects. They meet regularly and monitor all developments effectively, including school finances, and are more able to contribute to development discussions.
21. The school improvement plan is effectively focused on ways in which the school can develop its provision and raise standards even further for its very gifted pupils. Since these are very high already, priorities are judiciously centred on the professional development of staff to make teaching and learning even more effective, the development of opportunities in Years 7 to 11 for responsibility and decision-making, changes to the curriculum – especially for accelerated learning – and stronger university links. The evolving school evaluation process is a significant feature of the headteacher's reorganisation. Recently, staff, governors and pupils held 'vision' days to decide on important ways to move the school forwards. A similar session for parents is planned for the governors' annual report evening.
22. Leadership and management of subjects are very good overall. Standards of teaching are effectively checked, and assessment procedures are extremely thorough within departments, although there is not a whole school system of assessment as yet; the school is heavily dependent on its long serving, experienced teachers who know their pupils very well. Schemes of work are very thorough and directed towards the achievement of the highest standards.
23. The management of special educational needs is also very effective. There are only a few girls with individual education plans, usually related to emotional and behavioural problems, or specific learning difficulties, such as dyslexia. The plans are well known to all staff and pupils' progress is followed most meticulously. There is also an effective after-school programme for Years 10 and 11 with sixth form support, to which the less able are directed. Others use it for homework.
24. Pastoral care is managed very well by heads of school and their tutors; some are very experienced. Citizenship, including careers, personal development, health and social education are the responsibility of form tutors, who also satisfactorily ensure that collective worship occurs daily in the form of 'thought for the day'. The finance manager, network manager, premises manager and other administration staff provide very good support for the school and are effectively managed by the headteacher.

Provision for the gifted and talented

25. The school's population is in the top eight per cent of the ability range, and so all can be considered as gifted and talented. The school provides very rich and varied activities for all its pupils, which enhance the taught curriculum.

26. The top 20 per cent of the ability range is accepted by the school to be exceptional, but there are also well-defined criteria that the school uses generally and in all subjects to identify girls who are capable of the greatest achievements. Even so, there is an accepted view that all are capable of great things and need to be pushed to the limit. Many girls are working at GCSE level in Year 9, and after the National Curriculum tests in May go straight on to GCSE courses, with pupils often completing two pieces of high quality coursework before they enter Year 10. This enables pupils to take English language and mathematics examinations early in Year 11. In mathematics, the gifted and talented are stretched to the limit of their capabilities by being entered for the level 8 extension papers in the Key Stage 3 tests, and then completing most of the GCSE by the end of Year 10. They are then free to study at AS level in Year 11. Setting according to ability early on enables girls to be identified and pushed on to even higher achievement than is usual in the school.
27. Excellent opportunities are provided by all departments for the school's exceptionally gifted girls. There is an expectation that they will enter a top university in their chosen subject. Year 11 pupils, for example, participated in a summer chemistry school at Manchester University and a Year 13 girl was awarded a Nuffield Science Bursary at Imperial College for the summer. Girls applying to Oxford and Cambridge universities have professionally conducted mock interviews, and the school has long-term arrangements with Hertford College, Oxford, where academics give annual stimulating lectures in the 'Newstead at Oxford' course on a diverse range of subjects from 'Time and Narrative in the English Novel' to 'Stalin and his Reign of Terror'. Exceptionally gifted girls also attend extension courses for A-level studies at Villiers Park, which comprise exciting reading parties led by young post-graduates.
28. Personal, social and leadership skills are developed through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) to a very high standard throughout the school, and at a much higher level than in most schools. The gold level, for example, is most commonly achieved in sixth forms, but in this school it is often achieved in Years 10 and 11. In the sixth form, the platinum level is used, which has many elements more relevant to undergraduates. This reflects the way the school is developing the leadership qualities of many girls, preparing them to take the lead in their chosen careers.
29. Provision for careers education is a real strength of the school. There is a superb careers library available and this is very well used. Girls are given the responsibility to arrange their own work-shadowing and there were many excellent accounts of work experience seen on display on the citizenship notice board. The school was one of the first to be awarded the Investors in Careers Award in June 2000.
30. Provision for the gifted and talented in music is excellent. Membership of the chamber choir, for instance, is by audition only. A rehearsal of this choir was witnessed in which subtle musical nuance was achieved after detailed attention was given to the finest features. The singing of Deep River at the end of the rehearsal was truly spiritual and showed a maturely emotional understanding of this style of music. The contrast with the singing heard in assembly was stark; the example of such beautiful singing does not permeate the school as a whole, because the whole school singing was lacklustre and uninspired.

The enrichment of the curriculum

31. The taught curriculum is very academic, as befits provision for pupils of such high ability. There is a very wide range of extracurricular and enrichment activities to enhance it, however, and this makes an excellent contribution to the education of the whole child, providing intellectual, aesthetic and physical activities for recreation and competition. Most activities take place in the long lunchtime period provided for this purpose, and some after school every day of the week. Several were sampled during the inspection. Sports, such as hockey, netball and volleyball, are popular, and girls do very well. Trampolining, badminton and summer athletics are also available. Girls also take part in swimming sessions after school, and ski-training for trips to France and Canada. The school did well in local tournaments, such as the West Kent Minor Championships, the English Schools' Athletics Championship and the London Heathrow Games. In 1999 and again

in 2002, the school received the 'Sportsmark' accreditation; in 2001 it received a 'Healthy School' award.

32. Provision for the arts is another area of excellence, recognised in 2002 by the Arts Council's 'Artsmark' award for high participation and standards in music, drama, dance and art. Musical activities take place every day, ranging from junior, middle and chamber choirs to instrumental ensembles, orchestra and jazz group. Several music clubs were seen during the inspection and the overall provision was excellent. The chamber orchestra in rehearsal for the end of term concert, for example, demonstrated great attention to detail and a creative ability to interpret the direction of the conductor in 'Silent Night' and Borodin's 'Nocturne'.
33. Many other clubs are run weekly by the girls themselves who enjoy and seek this responsibility. Sixth form drama students, for example, put on their own scripted drama on a social issue – attitudes to lesbianism – in front of girls in Year 11. There was a superb rapport with the girls in the audience, who were treated as adults, and the subject was dealt with both ironically and sensitively. An excellent contribution was made to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education.
34. Further illustrating the rich variety of extracurricular activity during the inspection was a visit from the writer in residence, an art club and the school bank. Pupils also attended a psychology lecture; there was a Year 10 and 11 homework club, with sixth form support and ICT support. There was also an after school meeting of the Bromley Model United Nations 2003 committee, an event that this school has held for many years for Bromley Sixth formers. Debate begins in Year 7 with 'Arguers Anonymous', and continues through various media, such as mock trials, as girls go up the school. It culminates in 'The Bar Mock Trials', which Newstead has won on several occasions. In the sixth form, there is a programme of religious studies conferences which girls find stimulating and provocative. Philosophical theories on topics such as miracles and life after death are presented by a number of speakers. Girls then discuss in groups their reactions to them, which they find fascinating; the challenging nature of the conference subjects gives them the opportunity to think deeply about essential questions most people seldom consider.
35. After GCSE, many Year 11 girls go to primary schools to work with gifted and talented Year 6 pupils on such diverse subjects as ecosystems, composition in music and data-handling. This is of great benefit to both age groups.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

Teaching methods

36. Teaching methods are varied to suit each subject, but in some there is too much didactic teaching which makes pupils over-dependent on their teachers and does not develop their own research skills. The school is examining pedagogy and has already put some changes into operation, and has started to consult pupils on their preferences.

Adapting the curriculum to suit girls' particular interests and aptitudes

37. The curriculum is broad and balanced, satisfies statutory requirements and is enriched by a huge variety of extracurricular activities and visits. However, some anomalies prevent girls from choosing the options which reflect their own particular interests, especially in Years 10 and 11.
38. All girls study three sciences from Year 8 onwards, but these are taught discretely and girls must continue with all three for GCSE. The current triple science course takes a disproportionate amount of time out of the Key Stage 4 curriculum, especially for pupils who are budding linguists, for example.
39. There are no sets for modern languages. The consequences of this were particularly remarkable in a Year 8 lesson where French was being introduced as a second language. Several girls had

done some French before but some had done absolutely none. The result was that they were not appropriately challenged. Latin is introduced in Year 7, but not continued until Year 9, making it difficult to achieve continuity of learning.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

40. There are no key issues, but in order to continue to pursue excellence in all areas, the school should:

- (1) continue to examine its teaching methods to ensure that all girls learn to the best of their ability (paragraphs 36,48, 77):
 - continuing to reflect upon the curriculum provision to ensure that equal opportunity is given to all girls and that option choices are widened, reflecting girls' preferences, particularly by considering setting in modern languages and looking at the time allocation for science (paragraphs 37, 38, 39, 47);
 - ensuring that timings for homework and projects are known to parents and girls alike so that confusion does not arise (paragraph 17);
 - considering how girls may achieve their best levels at Key Stage 3 in all subjects (paragraph 2); and
 - considering the value of singing by the whole school in assembly (paragraph 30).

Sixth form

- (1) Review the teaching methods so that all girls learn to the best of their ability (paragraphs 124, 125).
- (2) Make more computers accessible in lessons for girls to use at will (paragraphs 42, 59, 81, 97, 116).
- (3) Seek to improve accommodation and resources (paragraphs 59, 103).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7 – 11	42
	Sixth form	54
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	2	23	13	4	0	0	0
Percentage	5	55	31	9	0	0	0
Sixth form							
Number	10	29	14	1	0	0	0
Percentage	19	53	26	2	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	674	265
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	9	0

Special educational needs	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	0	0
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	9	3

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	63

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

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.0
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2
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	2002	-	135	135

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	-	-	-
	Girls	134	132	133
	Total	134	132	133
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	99 (98)	98 (97)	99 (97)
	National	64 (63)	66 (65)	66 (59)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	99 (98)	98 (97)	96 (97)
	National	31 (28)	43 (42)	34 (30)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	-	-	-
	Girls	135	135	135
	Total	135	135	135
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	99 (100)	100 (100)	100 (99)
	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
	2002	-	126	126

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	-	-	-
	Girls	126	126	126
	Total	126	126	126
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	100 (99)	100 (99)	100 (100)
	National	50 (48)	91 (91)	96 (96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	77.0
	National	42.0

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

Vocational qualifications		Number	% success rate
Number studying for approved vocational qualifications or units and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all those they studied	School	0	-
	National	-	-

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	-	122	122
	Average point score per candidate	-	398.3	398.3
National	Average point score per candidate	-	n/a	n/a

		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	-	122	122		6	6
	Average point score per candidate	-	380.2	380.2		240	240
National	Average point score per candidate	-	Not available	Not available		Not available	Not available

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

International Baccalaureate		Number	% success rate
Number entered for the International Baccalaureate Diploma and the percentage of those pupils who achieved all they studied	School	0	-
	National		81.0

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	602	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	152	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	63	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	6	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	7	0	0
Black or Black British – African	12	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	10	0	0
Chinese	29	0	0
Any other ethnic group	43	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	7	0	0
Information not obtained	6	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	45
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	15

Financial year	2001/2
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Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	231

	£
Total income	3017438
Total expenditure	3004820
Expenditure per pupil	3313

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y11

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	76.3
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y11

Key Stage 3	26
Key Stage 4	24

Balance brought forward from previous year	36305
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Balance carried forward to next year	48923
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Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	11.9
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Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	12.5
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Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
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Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0.9
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Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0
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FTE - full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	939
Number of questionnaires returned	354

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	57	37	4	1	0
My child is making good progress in school.	67	30	0	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	58	38	2	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	32	52	10	3	3
The teaching is good.	49	45	1	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	25	51	16	2	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	51	41	6	1	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	87	12	1	1	0
The school works closely with parents.	25	52	15	2	7
The school is well led and managed.	56	38	1	0	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	62	33	4	0	1
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	51	40	3	1	5

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

41. The school takes about 25 girls per year from other schools in the sixth form; entry requirements are very high. Girls make very good and often excellent progress. The standards achieved in all subjects are impressive and the school has received an Achievement Award twice. Standards are very high; the school compares itself to 13 other similarly high achieving girls' schools and in 2002, it did better than even the corporate high average at A-level in certain subjects – further mathematics, art, English, classical civilisation, chemistry, biology, religious studies, music, economics and general studies. The results in some subjects – history and French – were depressed this year due to the marking problems of the examining board.
42. At AS level, standards are also very high. Girls did relatively better than the other top 13 schools in psychology, physical education, mathematics, history, and design and technology. Standards seen during the inspection were similarly very high in all the subjects sampled. Major contributory factors are the expectations and the expertise of teachers, girls' very good and usually excellent attitudes and their strong desire to succeed. Their very high literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, together with their ability to think logically and work out solutions to problems, further enable them to do well in whatever field they have chosen. In some subjects, the girls cannot use their ICT skills spontaneously, however, notably in classical civilisation, history and French, because computers are not available for this purpose.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

43. Girls' attitudes are most mature throughout the sixth form, and this contributes positively to their personal development. They are very keen to take responsibility in clubs, and act as mentors for Year 11 girls in the homework club. They act as leaders for Years 7 to 11 in their form periods. They hold various offices of responsibility in the student council and some act as coaches for extracurricular sports; many are trained as community sports leaders.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

44. Teaching is very good, with many excellent features. Teachers have very high levels of expertise in all subjects. In addition, the majority are experienced and have been educating girls to this standard for several years. They are therefore very familiar with the standards necessary to gain the grades for entry to the top universities.
45. Particularly successful teaching occurs when the teacher maintains a good balance between providing information and allowing girls to do things for themselves. In one lesson in biology, for example, excellent teaching resulted in Year 13 girls making outstanding progress. They learned to interpret complex genetic information accurately and with confidence. A similar style was seen successfully applied in a medical physics lesson. In design and technology, the teacher's enthusiasm, meticulous lesson preparation and very good teaching materials enable girls to reach very high standards.
46. Teachers' assessment of girls' work is always very good and has excellent features. In art, for example, girls are taught to value their work most as an expression of their own ideas, as practising artists. In drama, the excellent teaching is extremely well planned, stimulating and inspiring, and girls are thoroughly involved in their own evaluation and assessment processes.
47. Lessons usually proceed at a very fast pace, as in classical civilisation, where teachers use challenging questions to set high expectations all round. Sometimes this pace is related to a fairly low allocation of time for the subject, such as Year 12 psychology where this factor,

compounded with the newness of the subject in the sixth form, puts great pressure on teachers and girls alike to cover the course content. In physics, some girls who had just joined the school as sixth formers found the more analytical approach to the subject difficult to cope with. As a result of sensitive teaching and encouragement, the work produced by these girls now compares very favourably with that of the rest of the class.

48. Occasionally, the pace of lessons can be slower where teaching is didactic. Some lessons were seen in economics, chemistry and English, where the lack of variety in teaching methods resulted in girls remaining passive or losing concentration. The school is investigating teaching methods as part of its self evaluation process, and has recognised that changes are necessary to achieve even higher standards.

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

49. The sixth form curriculum is of high quality and is relevant to the aspirations of its students. The taught curriculum comprises academic subjects at AS and A-level. This is entirely appropriate for girls of this calibre, who mostly have their sights set on the pursuit of academic degrees and professional careers. However, the enrichment of the curriculum by the broad range of extracurricular activities makes this curriculum outstanding.
50. All girls begin with at least four AS level subjects, some with five. This is too onerous for all girls, and the school has recognised this. It restricts five to the more able girls. Some subjects with a small number of girls have less teaching time allocation; to cover these syllabuses completely, girls and teachers use private study time.
51. All girls play sports – many to a high level. Music is also popular. Many girls have achieved Grade V or more on their instruments, and there is a good take up of music at AS and A-level. The many opportunities to make music in orchestras, choirs, bands and smaller ensembles are eagerly taken by sixth formers.
52. The programme for extracurricular activities is excellent, ranging from lectures on general topics - such as the use of animals in medical research, the work of the United Nations, the view of an opera director, the impact of the human genome project and becoming a driver - to many opportunities to exercise leadership and responsibility. Girls also further their personal, social and leadership qualities through ASDAN at a level found in some universities, and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. There are many cultural visits to theatres and concerts.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

53. The school keeps extensive records of girls' progress and makes use of standardised external assessment procedures such as ALIS, to some extent, but does not find this sufficiently diagnostic for the very high levels of attainment in the school. More effective work is being done in comparing data with the 13 other top girls' schools which have similar pupil profiles.
54. Marking of work is meticulous, thorough, and contains comments for improvement which would frequently not be out of place on undergraduate essays.

Advice, support and guidance

55. Pastoral care of girls is managed very well. The form tutors are responsible for one-to-one tutorials with their student group and they spend a great deal of time supporting them in their studies, as do heads of department, who ensure that assessment is thorough; many are involving girls in taking some responsibility for evaluating their own learning and setting themselves targets. Consequently, girls feel that they are taking a hand in their own education.

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

56. Very well. Parents and students value the school provision highly and there is a very effective dialogue between them and the school in the majority of cases.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

57. Leadership and management are good. The new head of sixth form has been in post only for one term and has operated the current system of management, but has very good vision for its development. She has recognised the strengths of existing provision and identified several areas for improvement, particularly the one-to-one tutorials for girls with their tutors, and the wider setting of target grades. The full refurbishment of the sixth form area planned for next summer has already been costed.
58. Management of subjects is very good overall; all heads of departments are very well qualified and use their considerable expertise well. They ensure that the curricula followed for AS and A-levels meet examination requirements for which girls are very well prepared. They also encourage a very rich curriculum, including lectures, visits and field trips, in their subjects. They ensure that girls are well prepared for university by, for example, arranging mock interviews and visits to universities for summer schools.

Resources

59. Resources are generally good. The school directs all spending to improving provision. Departments are well stocked with text books, but have no computers in classrooms or access to laptops for spontaneous work. There are four computer rooms which are booked by subject teachers, however. The school's greatest resource is its teaching and support staff, which is most effectively used. Accommodation is satisfactory, although now rather old fashioned and in need of refurbishment. The area for drama, for example, is inadequate because it has no natural light or ventilation. The hall is too small for the whole school to assemble and the noisy heating system often interrupts concentration. Governors have been able to fund and plan some refurbishment of the sixth form area.

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

In the inspection, 13 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 by Year 13 pupils. Year 12 AS level results were not published by the school and cannot be compared, therefore.

AS level and VQ courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Mathematics	7	43	15	86	62	3.0	1.5
Religious Studies	5	60	26	100	85	3.8	2.4
Information technology Post-16 VQ	7	n/a	N/a	n/a	n/a	15.4	10.0

GCE A level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-B		% gaining grades A-E		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	15	87	46	93	96	8.1	6.6
Biology	36	53	34	100	88	7.1	5.2
Chemistry	28	86	43	100	90	8.7	6.0
Classical Studies	13	92	49	100	95	9.0	6.5
Communication Studies	10	30	31	100	93	5.7	5.5
Computer Studies	3	67	23	100	86	8.0	4.7
Economics	7	71	36	100	89	7.1	5.5
English Literature	51	69	37	100	95	7.9	5.9
French	22	64	38	95	89	7.5	5.6
Full Design and Technology	9	89	30	100	91	9.1	5.4
General Studies	25	80	30	96	85	8.2	4.9
Geography	17	82	38	100	91	8.6	5.7
German	7	86	40	100	91	9.4	5.8
History	23	91	35	100	88	9.3	5.4
Mathematics	61	75	43	97	87	7.8	5.8
Music	13	62	35	85	93	6.8	5.3
Other Social Studies	26	46	34	100	87	6.9	5.3
Physics	16	69	40	100	88	7.2	5.7
Religious Studies	5	80	38	100	92	7.6	5.9
Spanish	3	100	39	100	89	9.3	5.7

Sports/PE Studies	3	100	2	100	92	8.7	5.1
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SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

The focus was on mathematics, chemistry and physics. Biology was sampled. Many girls take biology at AS and A-level, and the standards achieved at both are very high. In the one biology lesson seen, excellent teaching resulted in Year 13 girls making outstanding progress. They learned to interpret complex genetic information accurately and with confidence. Levels of attainment were well above the national average.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- The very high standards achieved in AS and A-level classes and examinations.
- The quality of teaching, teachers' excellent subject knowledge and high expectations of students' learning, the support provided for girls to achieve success.
- The excellent attitude that girls bring to their work.

Areas for improvement

- The range of teaching styles to provide more opportunity for girls to participate in discussion.
- The use of ICT in the teaching and learning of mathematics.

60. The GCE A-level results in 2001 were very high in comparison with all schools nationally and were close to those of similar girls' grammar schools. The proportion of girls gaining A or B grades was very high compared with the national figure. A small number of girls were also entered for Further Mathematics and all gained grades between A and C. The results in 2002 were an improvement on those for the year before with a very high proportion gaining an A grade. The small number of girls who were also entered for Further Mathematics all gained A or B grades. In the AS examinations taken by girls in Year 12 in 2001, the results were well above the average for all students nationally. Again, the AS results in 2002 were better than those of the previous year and were significantly better than those for similar girls' grammar schools.
61. The range and standard of work seen during the inspection were very good. The teaching makes high demands on the girls and they respond well to this. In pure mathematics, for example, girls in Year 13 were studying differentiation of logarithmic and exponential functions. In statistics, girls understood probabilities and expectation of random variables and carried out complex calculations successfully. Those studying further mathematics were working on the graphs of conics, using polar equations, supported by the use of graphical calculators.
62. Girls in Year 12 are working at a good level at this early stage of their course. With good recall of GCSE knowledge, they began to build a more advanced understanding of trigonometry. However, by contrast, some had relatively poor recall of work already completed on arithmetic sequences. In a mechanics class, they applied the equations of uniformly accelerated motion to work on projectiles. In statistics they had completed extensive worked examples on standard deviation, variance and expectation. In a further mathematics class, girls were gaining an understanding of the formulae for the sum of a geometric progression. The quality of notes in girls' books is very good and in the majority of lessons they constructed valuable notes based on the detailed teaching. Some girls, particularly in Year 12, are unnecessarily dependent on the use of calculators for simple arithmetic calculations, but they are insufficiently familiar with graphical calculators and their use to sketch functions.

63. The quality of teaching is generally good or very good. Teachers have particularly strong subject knowledge that enables them to give clear explanations of difficult concepts and to identify and clarify girls' difficulties. Teachers construct their work on a sound basis of understanding of the girls' prior knowledge and have high expectations of them. Teachers' planning is detailed and takes account of the needs of individual girls. They sustain a fast and demanding pace in lessons. In some, a more interactive approach successfully engages girls' participation. However, some teaching is too didactic, with little opportunity for girls to engage in discussion. Some teacher expositions are too lengthy, making it difficult to maintain concentration and leaving insufficient time in the lesson for girls to work examples and for the teacher to identify difficulties they might experience. Although the use of ICT is identified in the schemes of work, it is spontaneously used to enhance the teaching and learning of mathematics. Teachers provide a very supportive framework for girls to progress, with additional classes where they may have difficulties or be getting behind with their work.
64. The girls' attitude to their learning is excellent. They engage in a very positive manner in lessons, always concentrating on the task and participating in discussion when the opportunity arises; some construct questions to clarify their understanding. However, this is dependent on the teaching style employed, which does not always maximise student participation, although girls can approach teachers if they have difficulties. Those in Year 13 have a good idea of how well they are doing, partly as a result of knowing the outcome of their AS examinations. Those who join the sixth form from other schools are particularly well integrated in the mathematics classes.
65. The very good teaching and learning are well supported by the management of the department, in particular the quality of planning. The department has carried out a thoughtful self-evaluation, successfully identifying its own areas for development. Overall there has been good progress since the previous inspection. In 1996, standards were well above national averages. In 2002, a significantly higher proportion of girls gained the highest grades at A level and as a result of the successful introduction of the AS courses, the department provides a greater range of curriculum opportunities and choice for students.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- External examination results are very high compared with those of other schools.
- Teaching is very good.
- Students achieve very well.
- Students' attainment and progress are monitored very effectively.
- Management and leadership of the subject are very good.

Area for improvement

- More opportunities are needed for students to learn independently.

66. Since the last inspection, attainment has improved faster than national expectations; standards have remained very high. In the A-level examinations in 2001, all girls gained at least grade D and most gained the top grades (A/B); this was very high in comparison with national figures. Girls' performance in these examinations was also significantly better than for their other A-level subjects. The initial results for the A-level examinations taken in 2002 indicate a further improvement, with nearly all girls gaining A/B grades. All those entered for AS examinations in 2002 gained at least grade D; the majority gained A/B grades.
67. This year, most of the 35 girls who had previously followed the AS-level course decided to continue studying chemistry in Year 13. From work seen during the inspection, standards achieved by these girls are well above the national average; girls are making very good progress. They demonstrate a very good grasp of chemical principles that they apply extremely well in unfamiliar circumstances. This was evident in a lesson on clay minerals, in which very good teaching

enabled girls to make a perfectly clear association between ion exchange properties and chemical structures.

68. Girls taking AS-level chemistry in Year 12 are making good progress; their overall attainment in lessons is above the national average. Of the 40 girls following the course, about a fifth joined the school at the beginning of the year. Many of these had not taken chemistry previously as a single subject at GCSE and they lacked some of the background needed to keep pace with the rest of the class. While additional support and encouragement from teachers has resulted in these girls largely making up this gap very successfully, some still occasionally find the pace of lessons somewhat daunting.
69. Girls display a very mature attitude to their work. They concentrate hard and persevere very well in lessons. Their response is always extremely positive. Relationships are very good. While the majority of girls present their work in a very confident manner, a few are rather quiet in lessons and are over-reliant on their teachers for information and guidance. Opportunities for girls to work independently and to develop understanding through activities that challenge them more as individuals are insufficient.
70. Teaching is very good overall; it was at least good in all the lessons seen. The work is very well organised and lessons are delivered in an enthusiastic manner. Teachers' very high expectations combined with their excellent subject knowledge ensure that all lessons contain a very high degree of academic rigour. On occasions, this can result in some aspects of the work being too didactic, which causes teachers not to consider girls' individual learning needs sufficiently. This was the case in an otherwise good Year 12 lesson on the properties of ions, in which some girls became rather confused by the complex organisation of the lesson. The teacher did not consolidate some aspects of the work sufficiently, particularly for those girls who had not studied the subject in this depth before.
71. The overall monitoring of girls' achievement is very effective; teachers know their students very well and provide valuable guidance on ways to improve. As a result, girls have a very good awareness of how well they are doing. The use of homework has improved since the last inspection and is now very well planned. Girls have confidence in their teachers and feel that they can turn to them for help.
72. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. Work in chemistry is now much better co-ordinated within the overall aims and policies of the science department. Teachers jointly plan and evaluate developments for the subject as a whole; they work very well together as a team. There has been a good improvement since the last inspection. However, while the A-level course is very well organised, there is limited time available in Year 12 for teaching the AS component; this reduces the opportunities for teachers to develop a wider range of teaching and learning approaches.

Physics

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

Strengths

- Results in external examinations are well above average.
- Teaching is very good.
- Girls make very good progress.
- The assessment of girls' attainment and progress is very good.
- The subject is very well led and managed.

Area for improvement

- Girls need to gain greater confidence in presenting and challenging their own ideas.

73. Since the last inspection, standards in physics have fluctuated but have remained well above the national average. In the A-level examinations in 2001, all the girls entered obtained at least grade E; the percentage gaining the highest grades (A/B) was well above the national average. The initial results for the A-level examinations in 2002 indicate an improvement in standards compared with 2001; most girls gained A/B grades. All of those entered for the AS examinations in 2002 obtained at least grade E and more than half gained A/B grades.
74. This year, a third of the 27 girls who had previously followed the AS-level course decided not to continue studying physics in Year 13. One reason given for this was the stress experienced by these girls as a result of limited teaching time in Year 12. From work seen during the inspection, the standards being achieved in Year 13 are well above the national average; girls are making very good progress. They use reasoning skills well when applying their very good understanding of physical principles to new situations. This was evident in a lesson on electromagnetism, where girls made very good sense of a highly complex problem by linking different theories of magnetic fields successfully. They enjoyed this work and responded very well to the considerable challenge provided.
75. Year 12 girls are making good progress; standards are above national expectations. About one quarter of these girls joined the school at the beginning of the year; some had not studied physics as a single GCSE subject before, and initially found the more analytical approach difficult to cope with. As a result of sensitive teaching and encouragement, the work produced by these girls now compares very favourably with that of the rest of the class. However, teachers still need to ensure that all girls are keeping up with the highly demanding pace set in most lessons. Teaching time in Year 12 remains limited, and this reduces the opportunities for consolidating previous work.
76. Girls display very good attitudes to their studies. They work with considerable interest and are keen to learn. They respond with particular enthusiasm when teaching provides a high degree of stimulation. Although relationships are very good, some girls are rather reluctant to question teachers' explanations or to venture answers to problems posed in lessons; they are often over-concerned about giving incorrect responses. In part, this results from the very high academic standards set in lessons. Teachers need to help girls develop greater confidence in presenting and challenging their own ideas.
77. Teaching is very good overall; all the lessons observed were at least good. Teachers have a very sound knowledge of the course requirements, and lessons are very well planned and organised. Their excellent subject knowledge, together with their immense enthusiasm, results in lessons being very well delivered; explanations of complex principles are developed particularly carefully. This was observed in a very good lesson on medical physics in which girls learned how to relate their knowledge of radioactive decay to the production of therapeutic materials. While the lesson contained a high degree of challenge, the teacher was careful to maintain a very good balance between providing information and allowing girls to do things for themselves. In a similar lesson with another teacher, however, they were provided with far more information. This resulted in too few demands being placed upon them and limited their independence. Not enough thought is given to monitoring the effectiveness of teaching methods.
78. The assessment of girls' progress has improved since the last inspection and is now very effective. Teachers meet regularly to review the standards of work achieved by different groups of girls. Very good use is made of homework. Teachers have a very good knowledge of girls' strengths and weaknesses and provide helpful advice on how to improve. As a result, girls are very aware of the standards they are achieving.
79. The subject is very effectively led and managed. Teaching is very well co-ordinated. Schemes of work are very well planned and comprehensive. Since the last inspection the work in physics has become better integrated into the broader aims and policies of the science department.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology is the only subject offered in this category. This subject was fully inspected.

Design and technology

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

Strengths

- The standard of attainment at AS and A-level.
- The enthusiastic and challenging teaching.
- The relationships of high quality between teachers and girls.

Areas for improvement

- Provision of appropriate high level ICT equipment.

80. Since the last inspection, the school has increased the number of girls who study this subject. Girls follow an AS in design and technology product design. At A-level, they follow a course that allows them to express their final project in a range of media including resistant materials, graphics or textiles. In both examinations, their results are very much higher than the national average. This is particularly impressive because all girls are entered for the GCSE short course at the end of Year 10. At AS level, teachers skilfully identify what girls do not know and suitably equip them to complete their coursework to very high standards.
81. In lessons, standards are high, with coursework that steadily improves as the course progresses. The rigour of the course improves designing skills and the effective reviewing between student and teacher identifies areas that they need to develop. Girls are very well supported in their learning and teachers spend extensive amounts of time reading coursework, proffering advice and giving out-of-class support. Although good opportunities are available for using computer-aided design and manufacture (CAD/CAM) in the AS course, and for applying it on the A-level course, the equipment is of a low level. The school has plans to overcome this.
82. Teaching is always very good and on occasions, excellent. Enthusiasm, verve and vitality abound, with girls responding very well to their teachers. The relations are excellent, and this allows girls to accept criticism without rancour. Lessons are extremely well prepared and have very good teaching materials.
83. Learning is very good in lessons. The very fast pace and thoughtful approaches by teachers, together with the supportive attitudes, allow girls to express their ideas both verbally and in drawing. The lower attaining girls in the subject feel very well supported and give of their best so that they too make very good progress. Girls are engaged on individual design tasks. When they need help, they ask their teacher, with whom they hold excellent dialogues.
84. The learning environment is good, and the surroundings have exciting and effective design proposals and quality outcomes on display to enthuse and inspire girls at every level. The skilful design and technology technician supports the work of the department by providing high quality resources, and helps individuals in lessons.
85. The management of design and technology is very good and the departmental development plan shows how all staff are involved. Since the last inspection, there has been a very good improvement in making more effective the provision of the subject, and in the good range and quality of work that girls produce.

BUSINESS

Economics is the only subject offered in this category. This subject was fully inspected.

Economics

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

Strengths

- Standards in examinations and on the course are well above average.
- Relationships between girls and teachers are very good.
- Very good teaching based on very good subject and examination knowledge leads to focused support for girls and very good achievement.
- The subject is very well led and girls' progress is well monitored.

Areas for improvement.

- Ensure that individual lessons have sufficient variety of activities and learning styles to maintain high levels of interest.

86. A-level results in 2001 were well above national averages. The standards achieved in the 2002 A and AS level examinations were also high but there are currently no national average figures for comparison. Overall, in the light of these girls' prior attainment and taking into account that they had not taken economics before joining the sixth form, these recent results represent very good achievement.
87. The standard of work of girls in Year 12 is above national expectations. Early into their course, they successfully apply their knowledge of factors affecting supply and demand in a market economy to new case studies presented by the teacher. Girls use their good numeracy skills to analyse data presented in a number of forms. They show increasing knowledge in using technical terms, such as 'price elasticity', 'equilibrium' and 'command economies' with growing confidence and accuracy. A good foundation is being laid here. Standards of work of current girls in Year 13 are well above national expectations. These girls are building on their achievements of last year's AS study. In one lesson, they participated in careful consideration of a recent unit test they had done. They showed good factual knowledge of major elements of the course and used this to develop a thoughtful analysis of their answers to the examination questions. They gave clear and intelligent responses when questioned by their teacher, confirming the strength of their previous learning.
88. Teaching is very good, and girls learn very well as a result. Confident subject and syllabus knowledge and detailed planning result in learning activities which are focused on meeting the needs of examination requirements. Marking of girls' work is very thorough and includes clear guidance on what they should do to improve. They are recommended pertinent web-sites to assist with their research. Occasionally, lessons can be too didactic and this can reduce the pace at which girls learn. Girls' attitudes and their relationships with staff are very good and make a positive contribution to their learning.
89. The department is very well managed. The quality of teaching and learning is a direct result of very good subject knowledge, and a commitment to continuing development of schemes of work so that they closely match examination requirements. Good use is made of journal and broadsheet articles, as well as standard text books and useful internet web-sites. Girls get valuable advice and guidance to help them gain places on to their chosen university courses and they say that they very much appreciate this support. Assessment of their work is thorough and is used to help set learning targets. Since the last inspection, standards have improved and have subsequently been maintained at a very high level. This represents very good progress.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on AS and A Level Unendorsed Art and Design examination course and the AS and A-level drama course. Music was sampled. Girls take music AS and A-level courses: provision is excellent and standards are very high. The one lesson seen was excellent. Girls clearly enjoyed the work of comparing four different versions of a Bach chorale, which was more than an academic coverage. The level of discussion on cadenzas was remarkable. Extracurricular provision in music is excellent and makes a particularly wonderful contribution to the girls' spiritual and cultural development.

Art and design

Provision in art is **very good**.

Strengths

- Attainment is very high.
- Teaching is very good; teaching methods secure the best from students.
- Girls' attitudes to the subjects are excellent.
- Girls' literacy levels are very high.
- Curriculum opportunities are very good.
- Accommodation for art is very good.

Areas for improvement

- The use of ICT in creative work.
- Girls' work is sometimes soiled with clay and plaster, chalk and charcoal dust because working surfaces are not clear or clean enough.

90. Attainment is very high. Over 85 per cent of girls achieve A or B grades at A-level. Girls in Year 13 produce extended research of very high quality, involving written studies, reviews of artists' work, sketches, analyses of media and other forms of documentary evidence. Drawing is a major strength. Portfolios show an excellent range of high-quality drawing, colour studies and imagery. Girls' three-dimensional work is also very developed; their relief work shows they confidently resolve the problems of compressed perspective. Clay sculptures by Year 12 girls show a very good understanding of the proportions of the human figure and the expressive potential of figure sculpture. Their preliminary sketches, studies and maquettes are used fruitfully to plan their work. A major strength of all girls is their ability to sustain their artwork over the longer period in order to develop work of very high quality. They have an excellent understanding of the planned creative process and bring independent research on artists and art movements together with analysis and experimentation with media and technique. Extremely high literacy levels enrich their research work and they articulate confidently developed ideas about their own and others' work.
91. Attitudes and behaviour are excellent. Girls' mature approach to their work reveals a high degree of self-reliance. They are confident about their own work and their knowledge of basic practical skills in art. They pursue their individual research in critical and contextual studies in a mature and independent manner. A Year 13 girl, for example, independently visited an exhibition, became interested in the artist's work, and followed this up by arranging to visit the artist's studio and to conduct an interview. Girls have very clear ideas about their educational directions and higher education opportunities. Good links with such providers allow girls opportunities to present their work to visiting tutors.
92. Teaching is very good. Much is concerned with practical or technical matters, often involving demonstrations of techniques or processes to improve girls' technical skills. In all aspects, teachers show very good subject knowledge and skills. They are also very skilled at leading girls through critical reviews in clear and useful ways in order to broaden their understanding. Their knowledge of examination assessment is very thorough. However, the assessment framework is not seen as an end in itself; instead, girls are taught to view their work as an expression of their own ideas and to value this as the main factor for success. In the view of one of the interviewed sixth-formers, "the teachers make us feel like practising artists, not exam candidates".
93. Curriculum opportunities are very good. Girls are encouraged to find their own individual creative pathways using media, techniques and styles of their choice. Diversity of approach is encouraged and girls explore a very wide range of two- and three-dimensional media and techniques, including painting, drawing, pastel drawing, watercolour, sculpture, plaster relief, clay modelling, silkscreen printing, block printing and photography. Opportunities to study art and artists are also wide ranging. Girls participate in organised visits to museums and galleries and art study visits abroad. Independent visits are also made, both to private galleries and to artists' studios. Girls have

access to life-drawing workshops in Years 12 and 13. Extension work with Ravensbourne College of Art gives them opportunities to work with specialist facilities.

94. Monitoring is very good. Girls' portfolios and journals are reviewed regularly and individual targets are established. Assessment is open and known to each girl. Every student has a clear idea of how her work is progressing, her strengths and weaknesses, and what she must do to consolidate strengths or address weaknesses.
95. Leadership is good. There is a clear vision of the subject and its range of provision. New developments are under way in bringing opportunities for more technical work such as photography. The department is well managed. Both art teachers are good managers and there is a secure approach to the organisation and running of all day-to-day functions of the department. Equipment and materials are maintained properly, the monitoring and assessment of girls' work function well and resourcing is effective. Special events and opportunities, such as study visits abroad, visiting lecturers, artists-in-residence or the staging of art exhibitions, are well organised. There is close monitoring of overall subject performance and the ongoing estimated grades of the girls.
96. Staffing is good. The teachers are experienced, knowledgeable practitioners who help girls achieve their best. The art technician-instructor ably supports the lessons in three-dimensional work. Accommodation is good. Since the last inspection, two smaller rooms have been combined into one larger classroom to provide better teaching space. Efficient storage and layout now enable girls to get to materials and equipment with ease. This addresses concerns expressed in the previous report. The sixth form art studio is also an excellent resource. However, although accommodation and storage are now good, the maintenance of the environment is unsatisfactory. Girls' work is sometimes soiled by clay and plaster, chalk and charcoal dust. Working surfaces should be clearer and cleaner.
97. Resources are deployed in a systematic and organised way to meet the varying needs of the taught elements of the course and girls' independent creative and research work. Although ICT provision is beginning to make an impact on art through a computer, scanner and digital camera in the department, there are insufficient opportunities for girls to integrate ICT into their creative work.

Drama

The quality of provision for drama is **excellent**.

Strengths

- Standards at AS and A-level are very high.
- Girls' attitudes to the subjects are outstanding.
- Teaching is inspirational.

Areas for improvement

- Accommodation is limiting further development.
- Regular safety checks of equipment and teaching areas are required.

98. The standards attained by girls in AS and A-level examinations in 2002 are likely to be very high when national figures are available. These results were gained in completely new examination syllabuses; therefore direct comparisons with girls' performances in courses in other years are not possible. Results in these previous courses have regularly been well above national expectations, except in 2001 when they were average.
99. Writing standards seen in Years 12 and 13 are very high. Written work shows thorough research skills and good, carefully discriminating use of the library and Internet to investigate writers, plays, themes and historical, social and cultural contexts. Diaries and notebooks indicate excellent awareness of assessment objectives and, consequently, writing is fluent and analytical, with interpretations well justified. Planning and story boarding are impressive, as are devised scripts

which display a thorough knowledge and understanding of the work and concepts of practitioners such as Stanislavski, Brecht and Artaud. Textual studies are perceptive and mature; discussion and problem-solving skills are very good.

100. Standards of performance are also very high. Ensemble and improvisation work are excellent; and girls' interpretation skills in Year 12 are already well above average. All girls readily explore ideas and topics together, challenge and support each other, and work quickly and creatively. They use body language, voice, space and levels well to give very effective presentations and are also becoming confident directors. Their ability to evaluate their own and others' performances is assured and effects immediate improvement.
101. The drama curriculum is considerably enhanced by a good range of theatre trips, visiting theatre groups, a performing arts festival and school plays, with their cross-curricular links with English, music, art and design technology. There are also many opportunities for girls to use information and communication technology for research, planning, design and writing. Additionally, considerable contributions are made to citizenship and girls' ethical, spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, through texts which range from 'The Trojan Women' by Euripides to Charlotte Keatley's "My Mother Said I Never Should," and through their studies and presentations of topical subjects such as cosmetic surgery and language acquisition and development.
102. Teaching and learning are excellent. Girls' outstanding relationships and their genuine enjoyment of the many challenges posed them ensure that their achievement is very good. Teaching is extremely well planned, lively, stimulating and inspiring. The highly committed teacher has very good subject knowledge, high expectations of all girls and, by providing individual target sheets, involves them thoroughly in evaluation and assessment processes.
103. The department is very well managed. New syllabuses have been successfully introduced, girls' progress is carefully monitored and improvement planning is very good. However, the present accommodation is barely adequate for the sixth form and inadequate for larger classes lower down the school. There is little storage space in the studio and it is not possible to develop the design and technical examination option because there is nowhere for girls to work, nor is there any portable lighting. Furthermore, there is often considerable extraneous noise from the hall and the adjacent gymnasium. The lighting rig is old, and not all lanterns in the hall have the required safety chains fitted. This department is achieving excellent results, and still seeking ways to improve, in spite of outdated facilities.

HUMANITIES

All humanity subjects were inspected.

Classical civilisation

Overall, the provision in classical civilisation is **very good**.

Strengths

- AS and A-level examination results are well above the national average.
- Teaching is very good, with high expectations and very detailed marking.
- Girls have very positive attitudes to the subject and the department provides very good support.

Areas for improvement

- Formal monitoring of teaching and departmental meetings are not established.
- Information and communication technology is not integrated into the teaching of classical civilisation.

104. Standards at the end of Year 12 and 13 are extremely high. In 2001, all girls passed classical civilisation at A-level, with 92 per cent gaining A and B grades, well above the national average of 49 per cent. Results in AS were also well above average. The number of girls studying classical

civilisation has increased steadily over the past three years and many continue their studies from AS to A-level. Increasing numbers are applying to study a classical subject at university and the department offers considerable support for those girls.

105. Standards of work seen in lessons and girls' written work are very high. Girls are mature in their approach to their work and most essays are well organised, well argued and supported with evidence. Where girls do not produce work to the required standard, detailed guidance is given on how to improve. Coursework is completed in Year 12 and 13 and the work of some higher ability girls in Year 13 achieved maximum marks in 2002. Girls are quick to draw references from literature other than that studied in class. In a Year 12 lesson, for example, one girl suggested a comparison between Homer's style and that of Tennyson. They read widely and most are able to use complex terms effectively in written essays and discussion. They are developing a detailed understanding of Greek and Roman tragedy and epic, and have a very good grasp of the main themes, for example of 'pietas' in the Aeneid and the role of the chorus in Greek tragedy. Many girls ask searching questions of their teachers in order to advance their understanding. However, a few girls do not take an active part in lessons, although they do well in written work.
106. Overall, the teaching of classical civilisation is very good. The enthusiasm of both teachers and the high quality of lessons have been instrumental in the increase in student numbers, so that there are now two teaching groups in Years 12 and 13. In the best lessons, there is a variety of activities which encourages student participation and develops their research and critical skills. In a Year 12 lesson, for example, girls analysed the role of women in the first four books of Homer's Odyssey and successfully used individual whiteboards to communicate their evidence to the group. In lessons seen, teachers demonstrated expertise but at times too little account was taken of the needs of individuals. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace; teachers set high expectations and use challenging questions. Assessment is frequent, and teachers' detailed comments enable girls to improve upon each piece of work. Out-of-class support is available for all.
107. Leadership and management in classical civilisation are good. The department is led by a committed practitioner with a clear vision for the subject. Results are well above the national average and the popularity of classical civilisation has led to a substantial increase in numbers of girls studying this subject. A very wide range of enrichment activities has been developed, including an annual visit to Greece, attendance at A-level lecture days, residential classics study weeks and the opportunity to join Year 7 classes to study Latin. However, there is no formal monitoring of the quality of teaching within the department and departmental meetings to discuss issues relating to teaching and learning are not scheduled. There is no use of information and communication technology in the teaching of classical civilisation and the display of classical material seen in the teaching classroom was minimal.
108. Improvement since the last inspection is good. In particular, the department has increased its learning resources and now has a fixed teaching base. Girls are confident in asking and responding to questions. However, information and communication technology is not used or integrated into schemes of work.

Geography

The overall quality of provision in geography is **excellent**.

Strengths

- Very high quality support is provided by dedicated specialist teachers in this excellently led department.
- Results achieved at both AS and A-level are consistently well above the national average.
- Especially effective support is given to girls planning to enter university.
- Very well planned fieldwork and carefully designed additional resources enrich the teaching and learning.

Areas for improvement

- Review the amount of time available for teaching in Year 12.
- Provision of the proposed e-classroom to improve teaching and learning opportunities.

109. Girls enter the sixth form with well above average results at GCSE. They continue to make good progress. One hundred per cent in 2001 obtained pass grades A to E, and 94 per cent achieved A to C grades. These results are well above the national average and those of similar schools. Although not yet validated, the provisional results for 2002 indicate a continuation of the same success rate. Achievement is slightly higher in Year 12 simply because the girls who join the sixth form have often followed different GCSE courses in their previous schools and so need to adjust. This they do very well, and by the end of Year 12 they perform at least as well as girls who joined the school earlier.
110. With such high quality results overall, there are few differences between groups. All girls make good progress and achieve their potential. Of particular note is the standard of independent learning achieved by girls in Year 13. In one lesson, high achieving girls were acting as critical readers of their own or a partner's work on selected global issues. One-to-one tutorials supported these girls' highly perceptive judgements and moved them firmly into areas of skill beyond that tested at A Level. In this same session, girls used ICT very efficiently to extend their learning. They wrote and edited with facility. They imported carefully selected data from multiple websites that they located with speed and interrogated with rigour. This was ICT use at its best.
111. Very good and often excellent teaching results in lessons that combine pace and challenge. In one lesson, Year 12 girls came unprepared because they had failed to read for homework a magazine article on the Holderness coastline, so learning was only satisfactory. They were not in a position to benefit in full from the teacher's excellent knowledge of the impact of alternative coastal defence judgements. The completion of preparatory homework assumes a greater importance when there are time pressures on the curriculum, as in the current Year 12 provision.
112. Good access to departmental resources, including the specially crafted module booklets, extends the challenge of the course and results in the wider reading that yields higher grades. The department makes good use of ICT. Well-advanced plans to develop an e-classroom, where girls make much more use of the Internet, should extend this strength and permit greater use of ICT in teaching. A supportive tutoring system brings very effective student tracking procedures. Girls are unstinting in their praise for the teaching they receive and recognise the dedication of the staff. They fully appreciate the quality of the extra help that they receive and describe the many ways in which teachers make up for lessons missed or deal with difficulties experienced. In general, however, teaching methods encourage independent study and make very clear the links between the different topics studied, as in a Year 12 lesson where a practical approach really established the problems of collecting data on the quality of life in various city environments.
113. Management in the department is of the highest quality. The Head of Department has a clear vision of excellence and takes effective steps to ensure that girls receive the very best. Particularly effective support for their progress arises from a sophisticated procedure for analysing and evaluating performance. The curriculum pressure caused by the fewer lessons in Year 12 is counteracted through the voluntary extra lessons provided at key points in the course. The school library has extremely well stocked shelves of geography texts with an emphasis on selections of pamphlets, articles and specialist data. This supports wider reading and there are general materials especially purchased to provide background reading for girls needing to prepare for interviews. Very good use is made of the support provided by the Parents' Association, which has recently helped the department to purchase field work equipment (soil augurs) and computer software. The close monitoring of teaching and marking ensures that best practice is discussed and shared. The evaluation and development of course support materials and field study opportunities ensure that learning is of the highest quality.

History

The overall provision for history is **excellent**.

Strengths

- Standards are very high in Years 12 and 13.
- Teaching is excellent.
- Girls are encouraged to undertake independent research and resources have been developed very well.
- Assessment and target setting procedures are very good.
- The department has developed schemes of work and the new approach to the subject at AS and A-level very well.
- Girls go on a range of visits and have the opportunity to attend student conferences.

Areas for improvement

- The department uses computers to support learning very well but computers are not yet available to be used in the classroom as an integral part of learning.

114. In 2001, standards at A-level were very high, with the majority of girls being awarded A grades. In 2002 results in the new A-level examinations were a little lower but still high in comparison with the national picture and girls who took the new AS examinations did very well. Results are consistently well above those seen elsewhere; girls are achieving well.

115. The standard of work in Year 13 is excellent. Girls show that they have both detailed knowledge of the periods that they are studying and the high level of skills in essay and document work required to achieve the highest grades. They approach their work with confidence and enthusiasm. They are generally very articulate and base their ideas and judgments on knowledge and understanding, and a careful study of texts, extracts and source materials. Girls respond very well to specific tasks in classroom discussion and they consult an appropriate range of books and web sites in preparing essays. The quality of most written work at A-level is excellent and all work seen was at least of a good standard. Document and essay work, particularly that which related to the study of Oliver Cromwell, is very impressive. Girls clearly plan and research their work well, and a particular strength in Year 13 is the ability of girls to take full responsibility for their own work as active rather than passive participants in lessons. Work observed here shows that they do not only cope with the complexity of pre-revolutionary Russia but also share their ideas with others to ensure that all achieve well. In Year 12, standards are equally high and girls are coping exceptionally well with unfamiliar vocabulary and new areas of study. Higher attaining girls show a real understanding of the impact of anti-Semitism in Germany, and set events in their political context very well.

116. Teaching is excellent and girls' learning reflects this. Teachers have in depth subject knowledge and an enthusiasm that they communicate to their girls. They use a variety of approaches while always ensuring that girls take responsibility for their own learning through research and discussion. Written work is rigorously assessed, girls have clearly-set targets and are taught how to improve their work. Girls have the opportunity to use a variety of carefully chosen resources and they make good use of computers for research and word processing. The department is not using computers in the classroom because they are not yet available.

117. The quality of teaching and learning is a result of the excellent management in the subject. The choice of course content contrasts well with GCSE work and provides interesting new areas of study. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Resources for the new courses and the library provision have been developed very well. The new system of examinations has been introduced very effectively and departmental documentation is easy to reach. Information for girls is clear and comprehensive although they do not have subject handbooks. The department is providing a rich experience for its students and they are able to participate in a variety of visits and students' conferences to extend their knowledge. Girls speak with enthusiasm about their studies and they judge provision to be excellent.

Psychology

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

Strengths

- Well-planned lessons provided by dedicated teachers provide girls with very good opportunities to work individually and collaboratively.
- Detailed marking provides girls with very clear guidance about their individual performance and progress.
- Standards achieved by girls since the subject was first examined in 1999 have consistently been well above the national average.

Areas for improvement

- Plans by the newly appointed Head of Department to improve the range and number of specialist resources need to be realised as quickly as possible.
- Systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and maintaining consistency of marking will need to be developed to meet the likely increase in the number of teachers contributing to this increasingly popular subject.

118. Results at A-level are consistently well above the national average. In 2001, 100 per cent of girls achieved A-E pass grades, with 73 per cent achieving A-C grades. Standards were very slightly below the average for the school but this reflects the fact that psychology is a completely new subject. Accordingly, the progress girls make is very good. National standards for 2002 are not yet available but the grades achieved by girls at both AS and A-level continue to indicate very good standards. Girls are achieving very well. This is particularly evident in Year 12 where they make particularly rapid progress. They already understand basic research principles and statistical analysis. They use their understanding of research into early learning and infant attachment to plan aspects of childcare practice. The work they do mirrors the range of short tasks and discursive writing required by the course. There is still insufficient use of the vocabulary of critique; girls are too ready to accept research studies at face value. By Year 13, the quality of analysis has improved significantly. Girls can critically analyse studies of, for example, bystander behaviour, and successfully link these to the main theories in the field.
119. Most girls choose to study psychology because they find the subject a refreshing change from GCSE. Many do not intend to study psychology for more than a year but change their minds when they obtain better than expected results. Whilst numbers following the A-level course are increasing, this does not include only the most academic. Girls appreciate the quality of the teaching and the willingness of the teachers to provide extra support whenever it is needed.
120. All the teaching seen was good or very good. Completed work and the results achieved indicate that teaching is very good overall. Lessons are conducted at a rapid pace and there is great pressure, especially in Year 12 where the newness of the subject and the lower time allocation put great strain on teachers and girls to cover the course content. The most vibrant lessons are those where there are attempts to extend the relevance of the subject. Psychology is taught as a subject with great everyday relevance. This is seen in paired and group work that focuses on real issues, such as gender stereotyping or features of eyewitness testimony. Use of guest speakers, such as a clinical psychologist, extends this relevance in very well attended lunchtime talks. Girls are particularly clear about the ethical considerations that should enlighten research into human and non-human participants. An important element of the teaching is the very detailed marking of girls' work. Prose comments provide clear advice on weaknesses and identify areas for improvement. Summative marking is also very detailed and is linked consistently with mark schemes. In Year 12, for example, assessed work on forming null hypotheses was being used by pairs of girls to re-write answers so that they understood how to earn full marks.
121. Subject leadership and management are very good overall. The head of department only took up her post this term and management issues are still at the planning stage. Her vision for this very popular subject is to balance continuing high academic success with awareness of current issues. The resources currently available are quite limited, but there is a growing library of journals and

research papers, and plans to increase the range of specialist texts. These will be particularly important for the increasing number of girls planning to continue to study psychology at university. The specialist teaching room is developing a subject ambience, with bright displays of girls' group work on key topics. There are detailed plans for extending outside contacts with conferences, support service providers and for developing ICT. In a department likely to expand, a system of close monitoring of marking and teaching will need to be developed.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English and French; Latin was sampled. The lesson seen in Year 12 was good and standards were above average. Provision is good but not cost effective since there are only four students taking Latin. Girls generally choose the more popular classical civilisation course where numbers are high. Spanish and German courses are also offered. None was sampled in this inspection.

English

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

Strengths

- Examination results are well above the national average.
- Teachers know their subject very well and communicate an enthusiasm for literature.
- Girls are highly motivated. They work hard to achieve the best standard possible.

Areas for improvement

- More systematic evaluation of teaching methods to refine understanding of how best to meet the range of girls' learning needs in lessons.
- Continued development of resources to support girls' independent learning.

122. English is a popular subject in the sixth form. The department caters for over 100 girls in A- and AS level courses in English Literature. Standards on entry are very high, reflecting the pattern of attainment at GCSE in the subject. In 2001, overall results at A-level in English literature were well above the national average, as they have been consistently for many years. Over two thirds of girls gained A and B grades. In 2002, results were still better: some 45 per cent of girls gained A grade passes. This was slightly above average for similar, highly selective girls' grammar schools. Results in 2001 for the new AS level course were very good. More than three quarters of candidates gained A or B grades in the subject. In 2002, there was again a further improvement. Sixty-eight per cent gained A grades, although results overall were broadly in line with the average for similar schools at this level.

123. Work seen during the inspection confirms these standards. Girls hold intelligent and sustained discussions about literature. They show considerable insight in their reading of set texts and higher attaining girls, in particular, bring to bear broad general knowledge from their own wider reading. Extended analytical and critical writing is a strength. Coursework essays are thorough and well structured, with detailed textual reference. For most girls, they show a confident and perceptive analysis of character, theme and style in the plays, novels and poetry set for the course. Girls make good use of opportunities to redraft and refine their writing. Essays are presented to a high standard, using word processing skills to good advantage. The achievement of individual girls is very good at both A- and AS level. The majority reach or exceed their target grades in examinations, based on expectations derived from GCSE grades. At all levels of attainment, they increase their breadth of understanding through reading relevant critical literature and through background research on the social and historical context of works studied.

124. Teaching is very good. Planning to ensure the coverage of work is thorough. Teachers' expectations are high, particularly in the rigorous approach adopted for the development of essays. Girls' work is assessed promptly, with detailed written comments that evaluate achievement constructively against examination grade criteria. Teachers monitor girls' 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 communicate their enthusiasm for it in lessons. This clearly enhances girls' interest in the subject overall. Teaching in lessons observed was either good or very good. The most effective lessons featured a lively interchange of ideas, and involved girls actively in the work. A successful balance between teacher and student contribution was not always fully achieved, however. Some lessons seen were too didactic. Girls remained passive for long stretches, or the teacher's role inhibited them from expressing or exploring their own response to literature, particularly those who find this a challenge. Teaching methods can also lack variety. Girls find it hard to maintain concentration if the same activity or technique continues throughout a long lesson. Nevertheless, generally speaking, teachers use a good range of methods, including small group discussions and student presentation of topics, after the necessary research and preparation. Girls respond well and with maturity to these tasks. They are highly motivated and work hard throughout their courses to increase knowledge and understanding. They also develop independent learning skills effectively through their own reading, note making and research. Teachers support them well by preparing helpful resource booklets and study packs, which are available in the school library. However, the department recognises the continuing need for further development of such resources in the light of changing syllabus requirements and developments in new technologies. More generally, teachers give generously of their own time to organise an impressive range of extracurricular and enrichment activities that further broaden girls' horizons and add to their enjoyment of the course. Amongst others, these include debating and cinema societies, theatre trips, study days and the annual Oxford conference, when some 50 sixth formers spend three days at the university to attend lectures and seminars.

125. Leadership and management of English in the sixth form are very good. Systems and policies are well established, to support staff and promote effective team working. The current acting head of department was appointed at the beginning of this academic year, but is a long-serving member of staff. She is strongly committed to maintaining the highest standards and promoting excellence in the subject. The departmental action plan sets a challenging agenda for future work. A programme to monitor standards of teaching and learning throughout the school is in place, but is not developed enough in the sixth form. A more systematic evaluation of teaching methods is needed in order to refine understanding of how best to meet the full range of girls' learning needs in lessons.

French

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

Strengths

- The very good teaching leads to high student motivation and very good standards.
- The good range of resources enables teachers to provide a good range of traditional learning activities.
- Access to exchanges and work experience in France provides valuable support and opportunity for students.

Areas for improvement

- The quality and quantity of resources for information and communication technology should be increased to support learning fully.
- Teaching methods should be developed to ensure more active participation in class by all girls.

126. Each year over the last four years more than 20 girls per year have been entered for A-level and a very small number have been entered for AS. A-level results have been consistently well above the national average for all schools and the number of higher grades (A and B) is above average. The most recent results for 2002 look well above average overall: well over half the girls attained grades A or B. Overall, girls perform slightly less well in French than in other A-level subjects. The AS results covered a broader spectrum, but the number of entries was too small for national comparisons to be meaningful.

127. The evidence from work seen in lessons and in girls' files during the inspection confirms these very good standards. Girls enter the sixth form with GCSE A* and A grades and the vast majority continue to achieve their potential and to make very good progress. Standards in Year 13 are well above the national average. Girls read with very good understanding and quickly identify main themes and points of detail. They write at good length and in appropriate detail: they confidently use a very good range of structures to marshal arguments about, for example, racism in Britain, green issues and the environment. The most able use sophisticated language to create excellent essays; the relatively less able display a less secure knowledge of adjectival agreement and common irregular verbs. The most able show considerable expertise in identifying gist and detail in video reports and they convey their wide range of opinions about Women at Work with varying degrees of oral confidence.

128. Attainment in Year 12 is also well above average. Although girls' confidence in speaking varies widely, many achieve standards well above those expected at this stage of an advanced course. A significant proportion is reluctant to converse in complete sentences but all the girls seen during the inspection displayed very high competence in aural comprehension work where they very effectively understand gist and elicit specific details. Those who do converse fully do so with very good accent and pronunciation. They develop a very good range of vocabulary and complex linguistic structures, including idiomatic usage, to write about young people's attitudes to reading and to create arguments for and against a reduction in working hours.

129. The sixth form teaching overall is very good: it is never less than good and some lessons are excellent. Where this is the case, some girls' achievements are very high. Similarly, high expectations, an excellent pace to lessons and very well planned use of time foster in most cases very good relations with the girls and they work hard to give of their best. All lessons have clear objectives. Teachers adopt a good range of teaching techniques: they use French as the normal means of communication for both learning and classroom management, and this sets an authentic atmosphere to which the girls generally respond well. They prepare the girls well for external examinations and particularly provide them with very good practice for oral assessment. The positive marking of girls' work throughout the course is conducive to ongoing improvement and progression in learning.

130. Girls adopt very positive attitudes to learning. They capitalise on the very good teaching and develop their skills of argument and discussion very well, especially in writing. They make very good use of private study and homework time and some do very useful research on the Internet to supplement their school tasks. When they need help they have the confidence to ask, and they invariably act on the advice given.
131. Most teachers in the department teach French in the sixth form and either German or Spanish in the main school. This helps to create some cohesion within the modern languages department. An excellent feature of the sixth form is the provision made for Year 12 girls to undertake work experience in Normandy; this opportunity operates alongside the regular exchange visit and raises significantly girls' linguistic competence as well as providing a useful and enjoyable experience. The school's plan for refurbishment provides an excellent opportunity to upgrade and update resources with modern technological equipment, which will aid learning.