

INSPECTION REPORT

GRAVENEY SCHOOL

London

LEA area: Wandsworth

Unique reference number: 212540

Headteacher: Mr G Stapleton

Reporting inspector: Mrs D Zachary
OIN 2940

Dates of inspection: 7th – 10th October 2002

Inspection number: 249819

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Foundation

Age range of pupils: 11-19

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Welham Road
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London

Postcode: SW17 9BU

Telephone number: 0208 682 7000

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mr Don Atkins

Date of previous inspection: 20th October 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities (sixth form)*	Aspect responsibilities (sixth form)
2940	Deborah Zachary	Registered inspector		How high are standards (results and achievements)? How well are students taught? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? How well is the school led and managed?
9646	Geraldine Osment	Lay inspector		How high are standards (attitudes, values and personal development)? How well does the school care for its students (advice, support and guidance)?
4486	Michael Weller	Team inspector	English Drama	
32183	Karen Roche	Team inspector	Design and technology	
32230	Bill Alexander	Team inspector	Computing Information technology VCE	
3793	John Ratcliffe	Team inspector	French	
15576	David Nebesnuick	Team inspector	History Economics	How well does the school care for its students (assessment)?
15462	Cliff Blakemore	Team inspector	Business education	
20192	Terry McDermott	Team inspector	Physical education	How good are curricular and other opportunities?
2740	Betty Barratt	Team inspector	Psychology	
1049	Brian Evans	Team inspector	Mathematics	
16548	Don Gwinnett	Team inspector	Art	
3735	Alan Webb	Team inspector	Physics Chemistry	

* All subjects are A and AS levels unless VCE is stated

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Graveney School is a technology college - a school with a specialism in information and communication technology (ICT). It is also a beacon school – a school identified as a centre of excellence that is required to support other schools. It is much bigger than most secondary schools, with 1815 pupils on roll, 1285 of whom are in Years 7 to 11. The size of the school has increased since the last inspection. There are more boys than girls in all year groups, and about 65 per cent of the pupils are from ethnic minorities. A large number of pupils – 37 per cent - speak English as an additional language, but only a very small number of these (five pupils) are at the early stages of acquiring English. The main languages other than English spoken by pupils are Urdu, Gujarati, Tamil and Punjabi. There is a very wide range of attainment of pupils entering the school. The number of pupils who have special educational needs in Years 7 to 11 is broadly average, including 30 pupils with Statements of Special Educational Need. Their educational needs are largely related to dyslexia or emotional and behavioural difficulties, but a few have other needs. However, the school also selects 30 per cent of pupils by ability, and, as a result, the attainment of pupils who enter the school is well above average overall. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is average, and though the pupils come from a range of economic backgrounds, overall this is also average. The school is located in an area of South-West London that is characterised by a mixture of affluence and poverty, and its immediate neighbourhood can present challenges to staff and pupils. Although the school has had a significant turnover of teachers in the last two years, it has been able to remain fully staffed, with temporary teachers used only when there is temporary absence.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is an outstanding school. Its governors, headteacher and senior managers are exceptional. They push themselves to improve standards but never lose sight of the welfare of those who learn within the school. The school treasures its teachers as well as its pupils, and teaching is of high quality. As a result, it successfully challenges even the highest performing individuals and supports those with difficulties effectively and with great care, including all pupils in the school's success. The relationships between pupils are exemplary, and for many the school provides a haven from outside pressures. The school gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Its headteacher and senior managers provide very strong yet sensitive leadership to both staff and pupils, underpinned by very effective management systems that allow improvements to be rapidly identified and carried out.
- Standards are high, and pupils' gifts and talents are nurtured at all levels; teachers provide opportunities for all to excel.
- Outstanding provision for pupils' personal development results in very good attitudes and behaviour, and excellent relationships.
- Strong support for those who might otherwise become disaffected ensures that there are no permanent exclusions and all pupils gain General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) passes.

What could be improved

- The school has no areas of weakness significant enough to be raised here.

As there are no areas for improvement there is no requirement for specific issues to be covered in a governors' action plan for the whole school. However, there is one area of improvement to be addressed for the sixth form, identified in the summary annex.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in October 1997. It responded well and since then has made very good improvements, well in excess of what might have been expected. GCSE and Year 9 national test results were already above average in 1997, and since then the rate of improvement has been significantly above that seen nationally. A-level results have also improved. Teaching, already a strength of the school in 1997, has improved still further. The school has developed its quality assurance, one of the last inspection's key issues, very well. The others concerned vocational courses and religious education (RE). The number of vocational courses has not increased, but the quality of these is good and the curriculum of the sixth form fully meets the needs of students. The sixth form has continued to expand. Religious education is now taught throughout Years 7-11, and is offered as an A level in the sixth form. Major improvements have been made in a variety of other areas, including facilities, performance management and programmes for gifted and talented and those needing support.

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 advanced-level (A-level) /advanced supplementary-level (AS-level) examinations.

Performance in:	compared with			
	all schools			similar schools
	1999	2000	2001	2001
GCSE examinations	B	A	A	A
A-levels/AS-levels	C	C	C	

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

The above table is based on the typical GCSE 'points' scored by the pupils in Year 11, and the typical A-level and AS-level points scored by sixth form pupils. The percentage of pupils who got five or more GCSE grades A* to C and the percentage of pupils who got five or more GCSE passes were also well above average in 2001. Very significantly, all pupils gained at least one GCSE pass in 2001 and 2002. This reflects the care the school takes to include everyone. 2002 results were better than 2001, at both GCSE and A level, but at the time of the inspection there were no national results for comparison. Standards seen during the inspection for Year 11 were well above average, reflecting recent examination results. Standards in Year 13 were above average indicating continuing improvement at this level. The school exceeded its targets for GCSE results last year and looks set to meet those for 2003, which are higher.

The 2001 results of national tests taken by Year 9 pupils in English, mathematics and science were similarly high, and 2002 results were a further improvement. The teachers' assessments of standards in most of the other subjects in 2001 and 2002 also show that standards are high. The standards of the current Year 9 are high and largely match the 2002 results and assessments.

Pupils' achievement is very good in Years 7 to 11. Although the pupils enter with standards that are well above average and leave with standards that are also well above average, this broad judgement of standards masks significant progress that is shown in detailed analyses made by the school and local education authority (LEA). These analyses include some in which the school's 2001 Year 11 results can be compared with results of other schools who had similarly high results for the corresponding Year 9 in 1999, and analyses for pupils in Year 9 in 2001, comparing their results to schools with intakes with similar Year 6 results. Both of these indicate that progress was at least above average. The inspection's judgement about achievement also takes into account the progress of the current pupils.

Achievement is good in Years 12 and 13. This judgement is further explained in the sixth form summary annex to the report.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils apply themselves very well to their work and participate well in activities. They are very ready to learn and expect to be interested by lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Though the number of temporary exclusions is high, these are individual incidents. Pupils understand and accept the schools' expectations. There are no permanent exclusions, which is very unusual in an inner-city school of this size.
Personal development and relationships	Very good personal development. Pupils show a very mature understanding of different viewpoints and relationships are excellent.
Attendance	Well above average for compulsory education (Years 7 to 11). Average in the sixth form where punctuality between lessons is also not as good as in the lower school.

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.

- Learning is also very good throughout the school. The teachers are subject specialists who interpret their subjects and explain very clearly so pupils gain a good depth of knowledge. They manage pupils very well and most lessons move forward at a brisk pace.
- Information and communication technology is very well used in Years 7 to 11 and literacy and numeracy are well taught. These key skills are not taught separately in the sixth form.
- The school meets the needs of individuals very well. The organisation of streams – teaching pupils in groups chosen according to their general attainment – is effective in ensuring that teachers can target the work that is presented more easily. However, teachers are well aware that within any subject there may be pupils who attain high levels even in a generally lower attaining stream. Teachers are also well aware of pupils who are still acquiring English, and those who have special needs. The one to one or small group teaching of these pupils is very good in Years 7 to 11.
- A significant number of lessons are taught outstandingly well and these engender a real joy in learning. Much teaching is very good or outstanding in the sixth form, but some teaching here lacks variety.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good for pupils in Years 7 to 9, and very good for pupils in Years 10 to 11 and in the sixth form. The school makes provision in Years 10 or 11 for separate sciences, vocational qualifications, GCSEs in dance, drama and languages taught after school, and there are three different foreign language options. The range of the sixth form curriculum is very wide although the statutory requirement for RE is not fully met.
Provision for pupils with special educational needs	Very good provision in Years 7 to 11. Detailed individual education plans and a support class with extra teachers. Good provision in Years 12 to 13 where numbers are much smaller, but very good for most severe needs.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Very good provision in Years 7 to 11. Pupils are identified carefully and progress monitored closely. They are supported partially through one to one or small group teaching and partially in class. They are placed in a variety of streams and teachers of all classes are aware of pupils needs. Satisfactory provision in Years 12 and 13.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good provision for spiritual development, excellent provision for social, moral and cultural. Although the school does not meet statutory requirements for daily corporate worship, assemblies are often well crafted, moving opportunities for personal development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare. Despite the size of the school, a well-organised pastoral system ensures that pupils are well known to teachers who have responsibility for them.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Outstanding. The headteacher and senior managers apply rigorous management skills to drive improvement forward yet have a leadership style that supports and inspires pupils and staff. There is an inclusive and reflective approach that allows even effective strategies to be questioned and improved.
How well the governors fulfil their responsibilities	Excellent overall, and very well at sixth form level. The aspects of statutory curriculum requirements that are not fully met are not affecting standards. Governors are exceptionally well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are also very clear about their own role. They act as articulate critical friends but primarily set strategy and hold managers to account for what the school achieves.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. Monitoring is excellent and action very effective for aspects affecting Years 7 to 11. Monitoring systems are strong for the sixth form, but, whilst they are mostly well applied to bring about improvement, some aspects could be developed to better effect.

The strategic use of resources	Excellent. The school supports its priorities most effectively and the above average carry forward is well justified. The principles of best value are applied in an exemplary way. The school constantly evaluates its practice and its cost effectiveness.
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PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<p>Parents showed strong support for the school. The best supported questionnaire points were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school expects their children to work hard and achieve their best • The school is well led and managed • They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem • Their children like school • Their children make good progress 	<p>Questionnaire comments were largely individual, but two areas were of significant concern here or at the parents' meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents were concerned about the mathematics scheme ('SMILE'). • Some parents were concerned that pupils have to carry heavy bags and there are no lockers

The inspection team agreed with the positive points made. They examined the mathematics scheme and its teaching, and found that the teaching is good. Teachers are aware of the need for some whole class teaching and are mostly using the scheme well to ensure individuals are challenged and enabled to move on. The school continues to review and modify its use of the scheme. It has also taken parents concerns about bags seriously, but studies have shown that the costs of a safe locker system are prohibitive. It continues to make arrangements for individuals with carrying difficulties.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is one of the largest in the country with 530 students altogether. There are currently more male students than female. The roll has steadily increased since the last inspection. All students are taught on the Graveney site. The students come from a very wide range of ethnic backgrounds. The largest single group is White British (about 22 per cent) and the other largest groups are other white heritage, Indian heritage and Pakistani heritage. A large number of students speak English as an additional language, but the majority are fully bilingual. Only a very small number of students are at the early stages of acquiring English. About two-thirds of the intake to the sixth form come from the Graveney Year 11, and the remainder from other institutions. The minimum entry requirements are 5 grade C GCSEs. Overall standards of attainment on entry to the sixth form are above average. Twenty-nine pupils are identified as having special educational needs, one of whom has a Statement. The school provides a very wide range of two-year courses leading to A-level or advanced vocational qualifications.

HOW GOOD THE SIXTH FORM IS

This is a very effective sixth form that is very cost-effective. It has improved well since the last inspection thanks to a reflective approach to leadership and management that gives careful attention to detail. Standards are rising. Teaching is now very good overall, and achievement, already good, looks set to improve further. The very wide curriculum meets the needs of students very well.

Strengths

- Teaching is very good or outstanding for a significant number of courses so students are learning particularly well in these subjects.
- Students' achievement is good overall and is still improving.
- Opportunities for enrichment and continuing spiritual moral, social and cultural development are outstanding.
- Support and guidance for students are of a high quality enabling them to flourish both academically and personally.
- There is very good leadership that consults everyone and meticulous management that ensures even such a large sixth form runs smoothly and is monitored very well.

What could be improved

- Though teaching quality is monitored very well, the mechanism to ensure that the best expertise helps to improve less effective teaching needs further development.

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	Good. Exam results were well above average in 2001. Though they were not as good in 2002, current standards are high. Teaching is good and achievement is good. The subject is well managed.
Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment

Chemistry	Good. Exam results were above average in 2001 and similar in 2002: these standards are being maintained. Teaching is good and achievement is good. The subject is well managed.
Physics	Good. Exam results were well above average in 2001; after a slight drop in 2002, current standards are also well above average. Teaching is good and achievement is good. The subject is well managed.
Design and technology	Satisfactory. Exam results were well below average in 2001, but raw results show an improvement in 2002. Current standards are above average. Teaching is satisfactory and achievement is satisfactory. The subject is well managed.
Business studies	Satisfactory. Exam results were well below average in 2001, and raw results were broadly similar in 2002. Current standards are average. Teaching, achievement and management are satisfactory.
Economics	Good. Exam results were above average in 2001 and similar in 2002: these standards are being maintained. Teaching is good and achievement is good. Management is satisfactory.
Computing	Very good. Exam results were well above average in 2001; after a slight drop in 2002, current standards are also well above average. Teaching and achievement are very good and the subject is very well managed.
Information and communication technology VCE	Good. The VCE is a new course so national comparisons of results are not yet possible. Standards of the current students are above average. Teaching is good and achievement is good. Management is good.
Physical education	Excellent. Exam results were well below average in 2001, but improved greatly in 2002. Standards of the current students are well above average. Achievement is very good. Teaching and management are excellent.
Art	Very good. Exam results were very high in 2001 and improved further in 2002. Current standards are well above average. Teaching and achievement are very good and the subject is very well managed.
Drama and theatre studies	Very good. Exam results were well above average in 2001, and levels were maintained in 2002. Current standards are also well above average. Teaching and achievement are very good and the subject is well managed.
History	Good. Exam results were below average in 2001 but rose significantly in 2002. Current standards are above average. Teaching is very good and achievement is good. The subject is well managed.
Psychology	Good. Exam results were average in 2001 and similar in 2002: these standards are being maintained. Teaching is good and achievement is satisfactory. Management is good.
English	Very good. Exam results were well above average in 2001; they were maintained in 2002, and current standards are also well above average. Teaching and achievement are very good and the subject is very well managed.
Curriculum area	Overall judgement about provision, with comment
French	Very good. Exam results were below average in 2001; they were much

	better in 2002, and current standards are above average. Teaching is very good and achievement good. The subject is very well managed.
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Other subjects sampled were biology, electronics, business studies VCE, media studies, geography, philosophy, religious studies, sociology, German and the English and mathematics GCSE retake courses. Teaching ranged from very good to satisfactory in the lessons that were seen.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Aspect	Comment
How well students are guided and supported	Very well. Assessment procedures and the way assessment is used to monitor and support students are exemplary. Personal support is very good.
Effectiveness of the leadership and management of the sixth form	Very effective, reflective leadership. Financial arrangements are outstanding. Organisation and analysis of results are strengths, and improvement in 2002 results where there had been weaknesses demonstrates the concern to raise standards. Equality of opportunity is very well promoted, and everyone is consulted. Monitoring of teaching is very good, but the methods of spreading best practice in teaching and learning need to be improved.

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"> Students interviewed expressed great satisfaction with the sixth form as a whole. They appreciated the high standards and support of teachers and fellow students On questionnaires students praised the wide choice of courses and information about the courses They felt they were taught well and challenged to do their best and said that teachers were accessible to help The large majority of questionnaires said that students enjoy being in the sixth form and would advise other students to join 	<p>Students interviewed did not raise significant areas for improvement. On questionnaires a significant minority felt that they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> were not kept well informed about progress were not given helpful and constructive advice on what they should do in the sixth form were not well-advised by the school and/ careers advisers on what to do afterwards

The inspection team agreed with the positive comments students made. However, they found that the reservations on questionnaires were not representative of what is happening in the sixth form. Students are kept well informed and receive good advice about what to do after years 12 and 13. Graveney pupils receive good advice in Year 11 before entering the sixth form. Students interviewed felt that those who did not receive good advice in Year 11 were probably from another institution.

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

Its headteacher and senior managers provide very strong yet sensitive leadership to both staff and pupils, underpinned by very effective management systems that allow improvements to be rapidly identified and carried out.

1. The senior management team and extended team is large because the school is large, but the managers within them operate with the same pervading ethos, driving improvement yet supporting the people that must achieve it. The headteacher, deputies and bursar, supported by the assistant heads and senior teachers, have found a remarkable balance between the organisation of smooth running management systems, the use of data analysis, and the visible presence around school and concern for staff that so encourages staff and pupils. This means that improvement of all aspects of provision and the raising of standards are achieved without ever losing sight of the importance of the individual child or staff member.
2. Informal visits to lessons are a key feature of the style of the leadership team. All members are expected to drop in to lessons a set number of times a term, and the coverage of subjects, teachers, and pupils is routinely monitored. Over two thousand informal visits were made last year, ensuring that every teacher would be seen around 20 times and every pupil still more frequently. The visits enable potential problems or strengths to be spotted for full investigation, support or celebration on another occasion, and, more importantly, give both staff and pupils the strong message that the school management is interested and involved in what they do. The headteacher plays a key role in this, leading by example, and is a highly visible figure around the school. On a visit to a Year 8 support group, possibly cut short because of the presence of an inspector already observing the lesson, he nevertheless was able to give a few words of support to the teacher and to individuals. One of the boys with special needs was obviously delighted to be reminded that he was needed in a team to play football after school, and was also pleased that his classwork was also praised. It is an unusual feature, but one that exemplifies the balance this outstanding headteacher achieves, that he and the schoolkeeper jointly manage the Years 8 and 9 football team.
3. One of the key issues at the time of the last inspection was to develop monitoring and evaluation into a full quality assurance programme. These developments have been a major factor in the schools very strong improvement over the intervening years. Self-review is now very efficient and effective, and the principles of best value applied in an exemplary way, and yet further refinements are still made. Examination data is acutely analysed to track improvement and raise issues, and middle managers such as heads of department are expected to play their part with the support of their line managers. Areas of the curriculum seen to be underperforming are identified and a closely focused programme for improvement put into place. Examples of recent improvements include A-level results in PE, design and technology and history, history GCSE, and the highest grades in Year 9 national tests in English, mathematics and science. History GCSE is a good example of how effective the school's systematic drive for improvement is. Results showed a significant improvement from an average points score of 5.4 in 2001 to 5.9 in 2002. The proportion gaining A* to C grades improved from 70 per cent to 86 per cent. These improvements resulted from very focused and systematic analysis of results and reflection on what could have caused them. The improvement drive had focused on groups who had been identified as underachieving in 2001, particularly boys and those middle attainers who just missed C grades. The timetable was revised to avoid a concentration of late afternoon lessons for Years 10 and 11. A drive on ensuring homework was completed well and handed in was instigated (boys had been the worst offenders the year before). A focus was built into units of work on ensuring pupils understood exactly what the difference between grade C and grade D history was – what they would have to demonstrate to get the C.
4. Best value is also assured by the way staff are routinely consulted as developments take place. A recent example of this is the way a whole school system for risk assessments is being refined. Under the leadership of the bursar, training and discussion have enabled teaching and support staff to contribute, and the school council is encouraged to raise issues. The valuing of staff opinions is one of the reasons that the school's recruitment and retention has been so effective. It is one aspect of the strong ethos of care for personnel that permeates the school. Staff appreciate the senior managers' 'open door' policy, and the career support – planning and mapping that is available for all staff, not just teachers. Senior managers actively promote career development within school, and are flexible in arranging the deployment of allowances to match staff talents with the needs of the

school. The continuing professional development available to staff is greatly valued as well as arrangements for support of new staff or newly qualified teachers. These factors have traditionally led to very good retention of staff but every year senior managers are alert to anticipate when individuals may be leaving, to the extent of a formal discussion with each staff member about the future. This year, alerted to a much bigger than usual turnover, and wary of national recruitment problems, some advertisements were placed on the anticipation of posts, with a sum budgeted to cover possible overstaffing (though this did not materialise). Advertisements were planned to focus on the school, to demonstrate the 'Graveney factor', both nationally and via the strong links with initial teacher training. The result was that all posts were filled, and with good quality staff. During the inspection a number of new staff, mostly newly qualified, were observed teaching. The success of the recruitment is demonstrated in that the majority of the lessons were good or better, and one was excellent whilst none were less than satisfactory.

5. The governors have an exceptional understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and are a highly effective group. Their review of the school is underpinned by a well thought out programme of activities and presentations from staff. They ask managers to account for statistics, for example exclusions of different ethnic groups, not just present the numbers. They respond well to new national requirements, such as the provision of a formal race equality policy. They set their own internal targets for academic success – for example they have set a target for 'level 6' attainment in next year's Year 9 national tests, not just 'level 5' as is required nationally. In discussion they show a very clear understanding of the role of the governing body as distinct from the headteacher or senior managers – they have the ability to distinguish strategy from operational management - and this understanding can only help the smooth operation of the school. The Chair of Governors has an enormous commitment to the school. His report to governors lists the meetings and visits he makes, and it is not unusual for him to be so occupied for half the school days in any month.
6. As a beacon school, members of staff and senior managers share their expertise with staff of other schools. This is much appreciated by the schools - the acting headteacher of one describes Graveney as an 'invaluable source of training'. There are also positive effects for Graveney, in that staff involved have a time for reflection on their own skills. Those working with primary schools are also thereby deepening their understanding of the primary curriculum and the experience that pupils have before reaching Graveney.

Standards are high, and pupils' gifts and talents are nurtured at all levels; teachers provide opportunities for all to excel.

7. In 2002 more than three-quarters of the pupils gained at least five grades A* to C at GCSE, the minimum requirement for entry to A-level courses, and a very high 99 per cent gained five passes. All students gained at least one pass. The first two of these are an improvement on 2001 results which were themselves high. The high number gaining at least five A* to C grades shows that the school is doing well for its middle attainers, pushing them on to reach the qualifications they need; the figures for A* to G grades illustrate the good progress that the lower attaining pupils make. The good progress of the higher attainers can be seen in the proportions of pupils getting A or A* grades at GCSE. These figures are significantly above the average in all major subjects - those with at least 40 pupils taking the courses, as one would expect of a school with a partially selective intake. However, some subjects' A and A* grades are outstanding: in ICT 70 per cent gained these grades in 2001, the most recent year for which national averages are available, as compared to a national average of 14 per cent; in art 55 per cent as compared to 18 per cent did so; and in science 31 per cent as compared to 11 per cent. In ICT it is significant, too, that all pupils on the course gained a grade C or above in 2001.
8. There are also outstanding subjects at A level and at Year 9. At A level in 2001, 88 per cent of students taking art and design gained grades A or B as opposed to 46 per cent nationally. In computer studies the figures were 50 per cent as opposed to 23 per cent. In drama, 64 per cent as opposed to 38 per cent, and in physics 62 per cent as opposed to 40 per cent. In Year 9 pupils take tests in English, mathematics and science and are assessed by their teachers in the other subjects. Level 5 is the level expected for their age and level 7 is a level indicating they are about three years ahead of a typical pupil. About 9 out of 10 pupils reach at least the level expected for

their age in English, mathematics and science. In 2001 the proportion reaching high levels (level 7 or above) was also in excess of the national, with mathematics and science particularly impressive at 45 percent (national 20 per cent) and 34 per cent (national 8 per cent) respectively. In the other subjects particular strengths show in ICT again, with 53 per cent reaching level 7 as opposed to 5 per cent nationally. One of the reasons that ICT is so strong, even given the fact that this is a technology college, is the depth of subject expertise of the teachers. Another is the way that pupils are encouraged to take responsibility – they are closely monitored and made aware of current attainment and what is needed to reach higher grades.

9. The banding arrangements – whereby pupils are taught in classes composed of pupils of broadly similar attainment, helps teachers to target work at the right level. Very good or outstanding teaching and learning was seen in all streams during the inspection. – for example in English in a Year 9 extension class and in a Year 7 support class, in history in a Year 9 upper class, in RE with a Year 7 middle class, in PE with a Year 8 middle class, and in science with a lower attaining Year 10 group. Pupils who are gifted across all subjects are commonly found in the extension classes, and here teachers challenge them to a very high level. In an outstanding Year 8 English lesson, pupils undertook a genuine intellectual exploration as they compared literary texts – initially *Watership Down* with the poem *The Lotos-eaters*, but later a variety of texts from their own reading.
10. Talented pupils, however, are found in all bands, and they are encouraged to excel. Some very high quality pieces of creative writing have been produced from pupils in bands outside the extension. In an outstanding history lesson for an upper class in Year 9, many pupils demonstrated an understanding of the aims of the peacemakers in the Treaty of Versailles that was far in advance of their age. In art, identification of the gifted and talented begins in the Autumn of Year 7, and numerous enhancement activities are provided. There have been notable successes such as a Year 9 pupil who won a competition run by the Worshipful Company of Painters and Stainers. Other work of a high standard from pupils outside the extension band includes very sensitively drawn self-portraits in Year 7 and excellent observational drawings of architectural features in Year 9, with very delicate tonal variation and a high level of representational accuracy. The music department's extensive programme of concerts, shows and visits provide opportunities for talented musicians, again from a wide variety of teaching bands, to gain a wide experience. A number of very high quality extra curricular vocal and instrumental groups perform regularly at charitable events, festivals and competitions in the locality of the school and beyond. The range of music making is very diverse and so caters for a wide variety of tastes, with four different choirs including a gospel choir, a wind band, string orchestra, jazz group and more than a dozen rock groups. Regular school concerts include two annual festivals of music and the carol concert. The PE department is another example of a subject area in which excellence is nurtured from all bands. In a Year 8 support class learning badminton, at least two pupils were attaining levels two years in advance of what is expected for their age. Not only could they execute particular shots such as long and short serves with accuracy and confidence, but they understood about the service rules and tactics of the game. Talented performers in PE also have the opportunity to represent the school or simply to take part in a wide variety of extra curricular activities. However, the success of this rapidly developing PE department can also be seen in the improving GCSE results - in 2001 68 percent of pupils gained grade C or better at GCSE, and in 2002 the figure was 96 per cent. Very good and sometimes outstanding teaching that is underpinned by high quality planning, assessment and management is a major reason for this success.

Outstanding provision for pupils' personal development results in very good attitudes and behaviour, and excellent relationships.

11. The handbook for Year 7 sums up the school's commitment to spiritual, moral, social and cultural values, stating clearly "We are a multicultural school with pupils whose ancestors came from all over the world. We think we are very lucky to have such a variety of cultures, languages and religions to enrich our lives". In practice, pupils' personal development is nurtured through a very wide variety of opportunities for learning. These may be a planned part of the curriculum, such as assemblies or

planned opportunities identified in schemes of work. Many teachers use groupwork and discussion as a way of learning, and encourage skills of reflection and respect for others' opinions. Activities to support charities are numerous, and fall under the headings of both planned and spontaneous opportunities. Other provision includes trips such as the 'Sail France' expedition (which enables pupils to improve team work and co-operation) or activities associated with the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. Other opportunities may be features of the school organisation, such as the school council, and system of school officers at sixth form level, which provide an opportunity for pupils and students to take responsibility. They may be extra curricular activities, such as music in the community, or other links with outside organisations such as the work of the Baptist church youth worker who runs a lunchtime club, and has done so for six years. They may simply be the provision of facilities such as the prayer room, for pupils to use for private prayer. What is distinctive is that put together the variety of opportunities add up to outstanding provision, which has a real impact on the personal qualities of the pupils in the school.

12. A study of the planned programme of assembly themes shows a wide variety of themes, with the school not afraid to address sensitive issues such as the remembrance of September 11th 2001. A variety of assemblies took place during the inspection week. Assemblies are often occasions for demonstrating teamwork – for example a deputy head with a head of year, or an assembly for Year 10 and 11 also attended by the Chair of Governors and the head boy and head girl. One particularly memorable assembly for Years 12 and 13 was tremendously effective both as moral and spiritual development. It took remembrance as a theme, linking a find in a junk shop with a school-based story.
13. The school, through its music in the community programme, provides excellent support to local charities and has a sheaf of appreciative letters including those from dignitaries such as the Lord Mayor of London. Recent charitable events have included concerts in support of the Mayor's charities, a local hospice, elderly people's home and the launch of the Refugee Week 2002. The school attends high profile public events such as a recent Musical Extravaganza at the Royal Festival Hall attended by the Earl and Countess of Wessex. All concerts are well supported by staff and parents and, in the case of the gospel choir and community choir, participants from the community. During the week of the inspection there was a delightful evening event where youngsters confidently sang and played solo items to an audience of very supportive friends and parents. The remarkable success of community music initiatives is down to the sheer energy, passion and commitment shown over many years by the two music teachers. Their efforts have resulted in an exhilarating ethos of musical endeavour in which pupils flourish both musically and personally.
14. The strengths of pupils' personal development are evident in the atmosphere of the school. It is a very pleasant place to be in, and the pupils themselves show a very strong commitment to their own learning. A Year 9 mathematics extension class, with a teacher new to the SMILE system that was in use, settled down to work immediately. The pupils concentrated extremely well and their books showed a high volume of accurate work completed within demanding timescales. The pupils at Graveney respond very well to challenge, yet are willing to ask for help because they trust the teachers. They are also articulate and reflective, which greatly helps learning when the subject is sensitive and complex. In a Year 11 mixed ability history group, for example, pupils of all attainment levels were open and thoughtful in their discussions of race politics in the United States during World War 2. In this outstanding lesson, the teacher had an excellent rapport with the class, and the pupils also trusted one another, and as a result they were confident enough to go deeply into complex ideas about attitudes to different races.

Strong support for those who might otherwise become disaffected ensures that there are no permanent exclusions and all pupils gain GCSE passes.

15. Though Graveney does not have a 'no exclusions' policy, it has had no permanent exclusions since 1997. When this is coupled with the 100 per cent record for pupils attaining at least one GCSE pass, which has stood for the last three years, the picture is of a school that is incredibly successful in its social inclusion. This outstanding record on GCSE passes is particularly praiseworthy given the high ratio of boys to girls in the school, in view of the national figures for the two genders. One of Graveney's particularly successful and innovative strategies is the focus on

completion of coursework in Year 10. Pupils are not allowed to 'graduate' to Year 11 unless their coursework is complete, and the school is staffed through the summer holidays to provide help and a workspace for pupils moving from Year 10 to 11 who have work to finish. For many, often boys, this support enables them to organise themselves and take responsibility in a way that stands them in good stead for the remainder of the course.

16. Graveney does have a high number of temporary exclusions when set against the national picture, but the figure is not extreme in the context of the inner city. The number of temporary exclusions is dropping, and behaviour in the school is very good. An analysis of these exclusions, which is carried out regularly by the school as part of on-going review, gives a picture of the school's discipline and support systems in action. Discipline and support are central to this, because the school does have strict clear rules, but each individual exclusion is accompanied by a support and reintegration programme - follow up action – to try to ensure that that exclusion is the last. Figures for temporary exclusions show that the greatest proportion of exclusions – more than 40 per cent - is from Year 7, as pupils are coming to terms with the rules by which Graveney operates. These rules are regularly updated by pupils themselves – last time in 2000 – and the very clear message that fighting is unacceptable came from them.
17. The pastoral system and the special needs department play key roles in ensuring that pupils do not become disaffected. The school's social inclusion unit plays a major part in liaison with both year teams and special needs teachers. It is well funded by the school to ensure that adults are available, and also draws on mentors from the business world. It helps pupils to catch up, but more importantly helps them to come to a rational understanding of themselves and their actions. It encourages them to recognise their own strengths, weaknesses and areas of interest, and to develop strategies to help them modify their behaviour and response to situations that could lead to problems. Pupils who were interviewed, including those who had been excluded, were very clear that the school was doing things right and that the younger ones who are excluded 'don't understand how to behave at Graveney'. A group of pupils of Caribbean heritage, who are proportionately the largest ethnic group in terms of exclusions, as nationally, perceived the senior management team as very fair. They said 'everyone gets treated the same; if you behave badly you will get suspended'. They saw the senior managers as on the side of those who wanted to learn, but also said that staff were 'even really supportive of the bad ones [pupils]'.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

Whole school

18. There are no areas for improvement for the whole school significant enough to be included here. During the inspection any minor points were discussed with the headteacher or other school managers, to support them in their internal action planning.

Sixth form

19. There is one main area for improvement related to the sixth form. This has already been identified by the school. It should be addressed in order to further raise the already high quality of what the school does.
 - Ensure that effective action is taken by course managers with the management of the sixth form to improve teaching in the areas that are less strong than others, so that the excellent practice in some subjects becomes more widespread. (Paragraph 61). The areas of teaching that should be addressed are primarily to do with pace, challenge and variety of style, but are also sometimes to do with planning appropriate work. (Paragraphs: 34, 38, 84, 90, 95, 133)
20. The following minor area should also be considered for inclusion in the action plan:
 - Students' punctuality to lessons (paragraph 31)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	Years 7– 11	30
	Sixth form	75
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils		47

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
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Years 7 – 11

Number	6	9	6	9	0	0	0
Percentage	20	30	20	30	0	0	0

Sixth form

Number	5	19	33	17	1	0	0
Percentage	7	25	44	23	1	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils on the school's roll	1285	530
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	141	29

Special educational needs

	Y7 – Y11	Sixth form
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	30	1
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	174	30

English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	662

Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	44*

* includes one term GCSE retake leavers

Attendance 2000-2001

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.2
National comparative data	8.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.5
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	158	103	261

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	138	140	149
	Girls	98	91	93
	Total	236	231	242
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	91 (87)	88 (89)	92 (92)
	National	(64)	(66)	(66)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	67 (56)	80 (78)	78 (76)
	National	(31)	(43)	(34)

Teachers' Assessments		English	Mathematics	Science
Numbers of pupils at NC level 5 and above	Boys	139	144	140
	Girls	94	94	91
	Total	233	238	231
Percentage of pupils at NC level 5 or above	School	89(94)	91 (91)	89 (87)
	National	(65)	(68)	(64)
Percentage of pupils at NC level 6 or above	School	66 (64)	77 (78)	72 (60)
	National	(31)	(42)	(33)

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

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

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2002	144	101	245

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	108	143	144
	Girls	81	99	101
	Total	189	242	245
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School	77 (72)	99 (97)	100 (100)
	National	(48)	(91)	(96)

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

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	48 (47)
	National	(39)

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	(6)
	National	N/a

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

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

		For candidates entered for GCE A / AS / Advanced GNVQ / VCE examinations		
		Boys	Girls	All
School	Number of candidates	112	77	189
	Average point score per candidate	238.5* (15.2)	236.4 (17.3)	237.6 (16.2)
National	Average point score per candidate	(16.9)	(18.0)	(17.5)

		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	112	77	189	6	4	10
	Average point score per candidate	233(14.9)	230.8(17.2)	237.18(16)	80 (6.8)	100(10.0)	88(7.5)
National	Average point score per candidate	(16.9)	(17.7)	(17.4)	(9.8)	(11.4)	(10.6)

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

**The system for awarding points for grades changed in 2002. For example an A grade at A level counted for 10 points in 2001, but is worth 120 points in 2002.*

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions*	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	623	35	0
White – Irish	0	1	0
White – any other White background	198	17	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	64	9	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	269	8	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	146	9	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	25	1	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	169	30	0
Black or Black British – African	150	15	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	29	3	0
Chinese	31	0	0
Any other ethnic group	97	6	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

* the fixed term exclusions are those for the last complete academic year, whilst ethnic background figures are for the current school population.

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	110.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	16.45

Education support staff: Y7 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	18.1
Total aggregate hours worked per week	671

Deployment of teachers: Y7 – Y13

Percentage of time teachers spend in contact with classes	71
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Average teaching group size: Y7 – Y 11

Key Stage 3	25.7
Key Stage 4	21.0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial year	2001-2002
	£
Total income	6641820
Total expenditure	6814496
Expenditure per pupil	3728
Balance brought forward from previous year	761250
Balance carried forward to next year	588574

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	38.7
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	40.8

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	1801
Number of questionnaires returned	384

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	51	45	3	<0.5	1
My child is making good progress in school.	50	43	3	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	48	45	3	<0.5	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	51	9	1	3
The teaching is good.	46	49	1	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	41	42	10	1	6
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	37	5	1	2
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	76	22	1	<0.5	<0.5
The school works closely with parents.	37	47	10	2	3
The school is well led and managed.	56	37	2	1	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	49	42	2	1	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	37	44	9	1	9

Other issues raised by parents

Parents' comments at the meeting, attended by 128 parents, and on questionnaires showed strong support for the school. They included praise for strong pastoral care, English and music. There was concern about the SMILE maths system for some pupils and some raised a need for lockers.

PART D: THE SIXTH FORM

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and students' achievements

21. Most students follow two-year courses leading to GCE A level or advanced level vocational qualifications and do well in their courses. Retention rates – the number of students who finish courses that they start – are good. Results have improved since the last inspection and show a trend of a small improvement each year. However, comparisons between 2000 and 2001 are not possible as the basis for calculating average scores changed with the arrival of AS levels.
22. Examination results in 2001 were broadly average for students in sixth forms, but above average compared to A and AS levels in colleges and schools together. At A level, they were in the top five per cent nationally in art and design, and were well above average in computing, drama, English, mathematics, and physics. They were above average in biology, chemistry and economics, and average in media studies, geography and sociology. Results were below average in French and history, and well below in business studies, design and technology and PE. There were too few candidates in other subjects to make statistical comparisons valid, though the results are discussed in part E of this report if they were a focus for the inspection. Female students outperformed male students, as was the case nationally.
23. In 2001 an analysis of students' performance in these different courses shows that in comparison to their GCSE grades, students did very well in computing, performing arts, and art and design. They did well in English, physics, psychology and economics. They underperformed in history, design and technology, PE and French.
24. In 2002, the average points score system changed and national comparisons are not yet available. However, raw results show improvement. In terms of the major subjects offered, the school took particular action to improve design and technology, PE and history. This was to very good effect with students now performing much better than would be expected in PE and art, and better than would be expected in computing, English, history and French. They performed as would be expected in design and technology. Students underperformed in business studies.
25. Current standards are above average overall, an improvement on the 2001 results. Details of improvements are shown in subject reports. Students' skills in communication and use of number are broadly average and skills in the use of computers are above average. Standards are well above average in English, mathematics, physics, computing, drama, art economics and PE. They are average in business education and psychology, and above average in the other subjects inspected. The intake to the sixth form is also above average, but detailed analyses of progress since GCSE indicate that achievement is good overall. There is not a significant variation in achievement of male and female students, nor of students from different ethnic backgrounds. Achievement is particularly good for gifted and talented pupils, good for pupils who have special educational needs and good for pupils who are at the early stages of acquisition of English. The good achievement partly results from the quality of teaching, with the very good subject knowledge and understanding enabling teachers to really challenge the most able. The support systems and the assessment and monitoring of students also have a significant effect.

Students' attitudes, values and personal development

26. As reported at the previous inspection, attitudes in the sixth form are very good. The students are enthusiastic about their work and want to do well. For example students taking psychology, a completely new subject, are very positive about their work, and they make rapid progress finding it challenging and stimulating. In PE lessons students show very good attitudes and a commitment to succeed at the highest level. The students' attitudes contribute to the excellent relationships that are evident in so many lessons throughout the sixth form. These contribute significantly to the relaxed yet highly purposeful working atmosphere in class. Behaviour is also very good and there have been no exclusions from the sixth form in the past year.

27. Pupils' personal development is also very good. Their social development is exceptional. Students and staff have excellent relationships and in response to these the students feel valued and are very willing to contribute to the life of the school and the wider community. The students show confidence and maturity in all that they do and they are excellent role models for younger pupils. The sixth form officials and prefects carry out wide ranging duties with dignity and through the school council and regular meetings with senior management have an important democratic role in the day-to-day life of the school. The students collaborate particularly well, again building on the excellent relationships. In a very good Year 12 French lesson, the students worked well with each other when discussing young people in society, for example.
28. The students demonstrate spiritual development in a variety of ways, with a willingness to reflect. Some artwork, for example, shows that they have considered the spiritual qualities and matters of private concern, and this contributes towards the very high quality of work produced. In a Year 12 RE lesson the students grappled well with the cosmological implications of the phrase 'nothing comes out of nothing'. The students show respect for others' viewpoints, and an understanding of the nature of the human spirit; in a philosophy lesson they reflected sensitively on the notion of sacrifice and 'the greatest good of the greatest number'. They also demonstrate highly developed understanding of morality. Students interviewed during the inspection had the confidence to express their own views, make reasoned judgements on ethical dilemmas and have total respect for the needs of others as well as their own. Their understanding of morality is supported by the strength of their cultural understanding. This goes well beyond tolerance of others into a depth of appreciation of the 'other'. Displays of work in design technology and art show that the work of the students is enriched through the use of images and icons from a wide variety of cultures.
29. Many students show a great maturity in their understanding of the world outside the school gates. Some have faced violent situations outside school or on journeys to and from school, and the school is conscious of the need for security. A student who had been attacked the evening before, in an incident unrelated to school, dealt with the matter calmly in school, accepting support but focusing on the learning of the day rather than allowing anger to affect school relationships.
30. Students' independent learning skills are encouraged in many lessons. For example, in a Year 12 design technology lesson all the students were fully engaged in individual activity when generating ideas for their radio project. Design and technology students benefit from a wide range of resource material that is systematically introduced in lessons to broaden their awareness. Most sixth form students are very confident users of ICT and those using the new silent study room and the library work conscientiously. However, a few courses do not exploit students' good ICT skills enough. A few students are reticent, especially lower attainers and those at the start of Year 12. Some departments tackle this well but others need to broaden teaching strategies to encourage participation.
31. Attendance rates for the sixth form are satisfactory this term. The rate of attendance has improved in Year 13 due to the good procedures that the school has in place to monitor it and take action. Students and parents sign a contract for joining the sixth form that states students should be punctual at all lessons, registrations and extension studies. However, this is a minor area for improvement as a significant number of students did not arrive punctually for lessons after school breaks during the week of the inspection. This was not from a lack of interest as students settled and contributed to lessons. Teachers in lessons with latecomers always remonstrated with the students involved and recorded the event.

HOW WELL ARE STUDENTS TAUGHT?

32. Teaching is very good in the sixth form, and students are learning very well as a result. Teaching has continued to improve since the last inspection. During the inspection, teaching was satisfactory or better in all but one lesson and most of it, more than three quarters, was good or better. Much teaching, about a third of all lessons, was very good or excellent and five lessons were outstanding - in chemistry, drama, history, PE and psychology. Students' work also showed evidence of sustained very good teaching, for example in the quality of marking.

33. Teaching is outstanding in PE, where strengths include exceptionally high expectations and excellent day-to-day assessment. It is very good in English, computing, history, drama, French and art. It is good in mathematics, physics, chemistry, ICT, psychology and economics and satisfactory in the other two courses inspected in detail, business studies and design and technology. In some subjects, and in the overall judgements made by the inspection team, teaching and learning, including the progress students make in lessons, are better than the students' long-term progress (achievement). This is because recent changes such as new staff, stability of teaching or improved strategies, mean that the high quality learning has yet to have a full impact in the longer term. Achievement, the judgement inspectors make about progress over a longer term, is good, and because the teaching is so strong it looks set to improve further.
34. The teaching of the gifted and talented and those who have particular special needs is very good. Those with special needs sometimes receive one to one support that is very well targeted. In one session observed, a student with dyslexia was helped to add a commentary to work on art nouveau. As a result the student was freed from restraints of writing to think aloud and show very good artistic appreciation. The teaching of students who speak English as an additional language is satisfactory. The large majority, who are confident and competent with English, have any needs met by subject teachers who are fully aware of their requirements. They learn as well as other groups. The very small number of students who are at the early stages of acquisition are highly motivated and seek out support that teachers willingly give. Records show that they are making good progress. However, the teaching of these very few pupils when they meet as a small group was unsatisfactory during the inspection. This was because the sessions at this stage of the year were not sufficiently well planned or prepared to meet their individual needs. The result was that learning was too slow.
35. The teachers have a very good subject knowledge and understanding. This enables them to make their subjects interesting and relevant, raising pupils' interest and effort. In an outstanding lesson, the teacher made excellent use of a contemporary parallel to Jacobean drama - television soap opera and television techniques - to deepen students' understanding. Teachers' very good knowledge of examination requirements enables them to prepare students well for examinations.
36. Teachers manage students very well. The excellent relationships and mutual respect and trust between teachers and students ensure that they give proper respect to each others views, and the atmosphere in most lessons encourages contributions. Teachers also have very high expectations. This means that lessons usually move forward at a brisk pace. The quality of interactions is generally very high. Questions usually challenge pupils to think for themselves. In the best lessons, instead of giving answers teachers often ask more probing questions to tease out answers from the students.
37. Students organise their work well in response to clear guidance from teachers. Their notes are detailed and provide a good basis for further study and revision. The marking of written work is generally very good, errors are checked and suggestions are made to students about how to improve. Homework is very well integrated with lessons, and is followed up by teachers.
38. In some subjects teaching is effective but follows a very similar pattern in many lessons. When this pattern is largely teaching of a 'lecture' style, it is characterised by a tendency to explain rather than explore. It can be very effective in helping the pupils to acquire facts and to address examination questions, and often provides students with a very supportive framework. However, students' learning skills are not so well developed if they do not have more variety in the teaching they experience. Students in the school have very good skills in ICT. These are put to good use in some subjects, but in others the use of computers is less apparent. This can contribute to a lack of variety. A lack of variety can also have an impact on pace of learning and the creativity that students show, both for higher attainers who are not sufficiently stimulated and for lower attainers who can lose concentration. Where teaching is satisfactory rather than better, pace is usually slower, sometimes because too much time is spent on the introduction. In some lessons, a few students are passive and do not volunteer ideas, so pace again drops.

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

39. The curriculum provided for sixth form students is very wide ranging and it meets the expressed needs of the students very well. About two thirds of the students move directly into this large sixth form from the main school. Approximately one-third join the sixth form from other schools in the surrounding area. Of the students who completed Year 13 in the summer of 2002, 92 per cent have moved on to higher education already, and a further four per cent have deferred their entry until 2003. Of those who were enrolled at the end of Year 12 in the summer of 2002, 93 per cent moved into Year 13 in September 2002. This demonstrates that the aspirations of the vast majority of students are to enter higher education directly from school. As a result the school focuses in the main on A-level subjects, with a small number of students taking advanced vocational courses in business education and ICT. Consisting of 25 academic advanced level courses and four vocational courses at advanced, intermediate and foundation level, the taught curriculum builds on students' past experience and extends the work of earlier years into new areas. The small number of students with particular learning difficulties receive very good provision – the content of the support programmes are negotiated with the individual. The challenging academic and enrichment programmes meet the needs of gifted and talented students very well. Provision for students at the early stages of acquiring English is satisfactory.
40. Though the last inspection resulted in a key issue to improve vocational provision, the school has been right to respond to demand by concentrating on quality rather than extending the number of courses. The curriculum fully meets the needs, aspirations and ambitions of those students who enrol. Key skills are currently supported through A-level subjects rather than taught separately, which is appropriate for the very large majority of Graveney students. Nevertheless, there are two minor areas that could be considered for future review. The provision for design and technology is comparatively limited, as there are no opportunities for students to follow courses in food or textiles. Few students take two foreign languages at A level.
41. There is a very extensive enrichment programme for sixth form students that operates pre-school, at lunchtimes, in the evenings, at weekends, and during times when the school is closed. The levels of take up are uniformly high for activities which range from voluntary work within the community, working with younger children in local junior schools in modern foreign language and ICT improvement programmes, a vast array of sporting and adventurous activities, research projects with forensic psychologists, social events, and course work catch up sessions. A very large and dedicated proportion of the staff ensure that these activities are maintained and so contribute strongly to the development of this very mature and sensible group of young people. Visiting speakers and workshops that focus on life beyond school are a strong feature of the provision. These include the Driving Standards Agency and health officials. Students are also able to lead sessions including a good presentation by three students from the Graveney School Amnesty Group during the inspection week. Eighty-three per cent of students who responded to the inspection questionnaire felt that the school provides a good range of worthwhile activities and enrichment courses. When students were interviewed during the inspection, all were positive about this aspect of the school's provision.
42. The school is very responsive to local circumstances. It is the major provider for this type of course in this multicultural area of Wandsworth. The borough has several other further education institutions, which provide a wide and complementary range of vocational and other types and levels of courses for post-16 students. The size of the sixth form means that the school provision stands alone in that it is not part of a consortium, but it co-operates well with other providers. It gives well informed, impartial and objective advice to its Year 11 pupils about the full range of post-16 options available to them. The staff have direct links with other providers and are in a good position to ensure that all students embark on courses which best meet their needs and aspirations.
43. All students are entitled to, and receive, detailed careers advice and guidance on opportunities post-18. In addition to the local careers service, students are supported by the strong 'sixth form careers and higher education team', who also oversee a well resourced and improving careers library. The school, with significant student input, has recently established a large and newly refurbished study area that is about to have the sixth form careers and higher education library attached. All sixth form students are able to undertake a work placement, which they must initiate for themselves. About 80 per cent of students do so, looking in the main to sample the working environment in which they

hope to engage after graduation from university. Conversations with several Year 13 students indicate that this is a salient feature in their selection of university courses.

44. The school, as at the time of the last inspection, does not meet the statutory requirement for RE nor daily collective worship, but this is not currently restricting pupils' spiritual development. Overall, the provision the school makes for students' continuing personal, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Though there is no formal collective worship, there is a well-established and effective programme of assemblies. Assembly themes for this term have included "Where does inner peace come from?" and "Why it is important to exercise the right to vote". Many lessons allow students to appreciate the intangible, and also successfully promotes spiritual development through creative writing and poetry. A group of sixth formers worked with the poet in residence at the Royal Festival Hall and their work is currently on display there. In psychology lessons the students' personal development is well supported by the constant requirement to understand human feelings, and consider the impact of human action on others.
45. The moral development of the students is supported by the excellent moral guidance that students receive from Year 7. Students joining the sixth form from other establishments feel they are very quickly inducted into a climate of aspiration where they can flourish and blossom. The system that allows students to act as school officials gives them significant responsibility, and enables them to take the initiative. The sports and charity officers, for example, organise a very wide variety of activities so that there is something for everyone to enjoy and those less fortunate can benefit as well, for example basketball competitions for pupils and staff to support Sports Relief.
46. The school affirms its commitment to inclusion with an explicit statement that:- ' We are a multi-cultural school with people whose ancestors come from all over the world. We think we are very lucky to have such a variety of cultures, languages and religions to enrich our lives". Provision for multicultural education is embedded in school activities, and cultural development is further improved by the range of visual and performing arts, and the sense of history evident in the school. For example participation in musical activities is very high and of a very high standard and displays of photographs illustrate the schools' rich heritage and traditions.
47. There is a very harmonious and tolerant atmosphere in the sixth form. It has a very strong work ethic, is fully inclusive, and is open to ideas and suggestions from all of its members. The attitudes and behaviour of the student body cannot be faulted, and they leave the school confident and fully prepared to meet their futures.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS STUDENTS?

Assessment

48. Assessment and monitoring of students' work are very effective. Procedures are outstanding and students have very positive views about the advice offered to them. There is a strong and effective sixth form team that provides this support. Each department has an assessment policy and there are annual team meetings to review each department in turn. There is an annual sixth form co-ordination meeting that brings all the developments together. The assessment procedures are used very well for guiding curricular planning, as seen in the recent reviews of the history and psychology courses.
49. Students are set an individual minimum target grade, based on their GCSE performance, and this system enables the subject teachers and the sixth form team to place students' performance in context and to identify what is real underachievement. It enables each student to focus on academic improvement and achievement. All students have an academic record which is included in the student organisers and which the form tutors closely monitor. Individual action plans are negotiated twice yearly with every student and this provides a sense of purpose and impetus for improvement. The aim of the monitoring process is to raise standards and to ensure that students receive the necessary support to achieve their best performance. This is an excellent system that achieves its objectives.

50. Progress is reported on very effectively. Letters are sent to parents where there is a cause for concern. There is very good communication by telephone by departments and by the sixth form year team; in this way parents are alerted to any possible problems in a student's progress at an early stage. This process includes all students who are not performing to their optimum level. Regular communication with parents is a strong feature of the monitoring arrangements.
51. There are many examples of very good and excellent practice in the departments. In PE practical assessments are thorough and replicate examination criteria, Students know exactly where they are in terms of progress towards target grades and all monitoring data is fully shared with the students. Academic performance is carefully tracked and follow up is immediate. Assessment objectives are constantly referred to in English and there are excellent links and references to examination criteria. In psychology, assignments are regularly and rigorously assessed against examination criteria, and outcomes are used to track students' progress, inform teaching, and set targets for improvement. Students are prepared very well for the examinations in many of the subjects, very good practice was observed in economics, ICT and the science subjects. Many subjects provide additional after school support.

Advice, support and guidance

52. The school provides support and guidance for students that are of a high quality. The excellent relationships that exist in the school add considerably to the level of care and guidance available. Because of the quality of the support offered, students are able to flourish not only academically but personally as well; for some the school is a haven from pressures outside.
53. The school has very good procedures for ensuring the safety and welfare of sixth form students. Its health and safety procedures are very thorough although one minor concern was noted during the inspection to do with accommodation for ICT. The school has very good arrangements in place for child protection issues and there are very good arrangements for first aid and medical support.
54. Induction procedures for the sixth form are extensive and detailed. All prospective students, whether internal or external, have the opportunities and expectations of sixth form study explained to them in detail. The very clear sixth form prospectus is supported at meetings where managers, tutors and current students address potential Year 12 entrants and their families. After the GCSE results the sixth form team offers a pre-enrolment drop-in opportunity for prospective students to discuss the range of courses available. This provides an effective way for all students, including those new to the sixth form, to discuss possible courses options and requirements with experienced tutors. Very good advice and guidance, both from the sixth form tutors and from the departments, continues throughout the sixth form experience for all students and a very high level of satisfaction was evident during the inspection. The impact of the very high quality of the support and guidance provided for the students can be seen in the very good results achieved by most students.
55. The tutorial programme is detailed and well prepared. It provides opportunities for tutors to consult students individually and to provide advice and guidance on a range of academic and personal development issues. During the inspection week, Year 12 tutors were helping students to understand how teacher marking supported learning and how this could be used to identify gaps and hence improve academic performance. Year 13 tutors were working with students to develop their UCAS personal statements. All tutors have received training to enable them to give high quality support to the students. Careers advice is provided on an individual basis and gives clear advice about the different pathways both at the end of Year 12 and Year 13. Students receive very good advice about higher education destinations and most students obtain their first choice university.
56. Very effective advice is provided for students with learning difficulties and the gifted and talented students are supported with further opportunities to develop, in partnership with two other local secondary schools. Students at the early stages of acquiring English are provided with the secure atmosphere they need to gain confidence. Subject teachers are aware of their particular needs. Students interviewed during the inspection were very positive about the advice, support and guidance they receive. Eighty nine per cent of students who responded to the inspection questionnaire said

that they enjoy being in the sixth form and would advise other students to join the sixth form in this school.

57. Procedures for the monitoring and improving of attendance are good and have resulted in a better rate of attendance this term amongst Year 13 students. There is currently an issue over punctuality in sixth form lessons, which is being monitored by staff.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH STUDENTS?

58. During interviews students expressed great satisfaction with the school. They felt that the range of opportunities provided in the sixth form met their needs very well and they enjoyed and valued their sixth form experience. They felt they were well challenged and expected to do their best. Year 13 students studying English were particularly pleased with the very good subject knowledge of their teachers, the opportunities they were given to use their initiative and felt they had received very good preparation and guidance for A-level English. All of the students appreciated the high standards set by the school but also the way that fellow students support and praise each other. In the student questionnaire a minority showed discontent about aspects of the advice they receive but this was not born out in the many formal and informal discussions that members of the inspection team held with students during the inspection.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

59. The quality of leadership and management of the sixth form is very good. The senior managers of the sixth form, led by the Assistant Headteacher/Director of 16-19 Education, are also members of the school's senior management team and extended senior management team, and this ensures that sixth form concerns play a full part in school decision-making. The school's aims and the values that underpin the work of the sixth form are relevant to the needs of the students. They are embedded well in all aspects of the school's work. There is a very good relationship between the sixth form and the main school. The sixth form leadership displays the same concern for the individual and his or her achievements and the same strengths in organisation and analysis as is evident in the school as a whole. For example, the effective and well-targeted development plan for 16-19 is used as a working document with notes and evaluations overlaid on the comprehensive original layout. Staff and students are very well consulted and their views acted upon.
60. The governors, too, are as strong in their work in relation to the sixth form as they are in the school as a whole. They account for its performance and influence its work exceptionally well. Whilst the requirement for RE for all students is not fully met, the governors are concerned for the wider development of students and ensure that opportunities for continuing spiritual development are provided. They have an excellent knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form, as well as the rest of the school. After A levels, for example, the senior management team reviews each department's examination performance. Conclusions are reported and discussed by the governors' curriculum sub-committee. The Director reports in person to governors on these occasions. Her reports are supported by a self-evaluation process that is very thorough and comprehensive. Consultation with both students and staff is very strong.
61. The leadership and management provided by a significant number of subject leaders is very effective. These include art, computing, English, French and PE. In these subjects subject leaders are constantly striving for improvement and their organisation is very strong. In PE where management is outstanding there is a particularly clear sense of direction for the subject supported by extremely effective tracking of students and monitoring of teaching and learning. Many A-level subjects are well led, and none are less than satisfactory. Where leadership and management are not as strong courses are appropriately planned and delivered, but there is less innovation and less variation in teaching styles. This limited variation in teaching styles has been identified by sixth form managers as an area they would wish to improve. Despite whole school monitoring systems and professional development specifically related to sixth form teaching, there is still significant variation between the best and the least strong teaching. One reason for this is that whilst sixth form managers are very

aware of teaching quality through their regular visits to groups, there is not a fully effective mechanism for ensuring their expertise, or that of the strongest teachers in a range of subjects, actually impacts on lessons in the least effective A-level subjects. This means that some, mainly minor, ways in which teaching could be improved are not acted on as efficiently as they might be. These include areas of weakness in business studies, design and technology and teaching of pupils with English as an additional language. Even within subjects where teaching and leadership are good, lesson observation may miss aspects of relevance particularly to post-16 students and the best teaching is not always effectively shared. Teaching is regularly monitored within the school's arrangements for Performance Management. However, in some subjects, for example in psychology, lesson observation is not sufficiently focused on subject specific issues to be fully effective in ensuring consistency in the quality of teaching, and there is too little opportunity for consistency to be promoted through the sharing of the very good practice.

62. Educational priorities are very well supported through excellent procedures for financial planning, administration and control. The school's exceptionally clear rationale for spending decisions is firmly rooted in school development planning as a whole, and in that for the sixth form in particular. Expenditure is closely monitored by the very experienced finance sub-committee of the governing body which is kept very well informed by detailed and meticulous cost analysis, monitoring of expenditure and planning by the school bursar. All sixth form funding is strictly allocated for its purpose to ensure the highest possible quality provision and achievement post-16. There is no subsidy from, or to, funding for the main school. Course provision is determined by the students' choices, balanced by the stringent annual costing of individual courses to ensure that all are financially viable. This costing forms part of the very detailed annual analysis of sixth form effectiveness and value for money as a whole. The principles of best value are strictly applied in relation to all expenditure in accordance with practice in the school as a whole with a particular emphasis on the close analysis of students' performance in external examinations in comparison with that in other schools.

Resources

63. Resources for learning are good. The stock of books, materials and equipment is good or better in most subject areas. Business education, computing, drama, English, French, and PE are particularly well equipped. Resources are at least adequate in all subject areas that were a focus for the inspection. The resources of the library and flexible learning area have been greatly augmented as the sixth form has increased in size. However, reference books for chemistry, economics, history and physics could valuably be further reviewed and augmented.
64. There is a very good match of teachers to the curricular needs of the students in the sixth form in the majority of subject areas. The effect of this is that the teaching is based on very strong knowledge and understanding in almost all subjects. Teachers are largely experienced in the examination courses, and the size of the sixth form means that new staff can be supported by others who are teaching the same course.
65. The school has enough accommodation for sixth form students but it is dispersed over the site, which in itself is widespread. The attractive central grounds give some areas the feel of a college, which part of the school once was, and this in itself adds to the positive ethos of the sixth form. The very recent conversion of an unused gym to a large sixth form study room (at the instigation of the sixth formers themselves) has been effective though numbers using it as yet are small because heating is not yet adequate. Some rooms are small for the size of classes they must now accommodate. In ICT the size of room combined with the large teaching group does not allow for both monitors and keyboards to fit on worktops, so some students operate keyboards on their laps, which is not an ideal situation.

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

66. In the inspection, 15 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2001.

GCE A level and AVCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Further mathematics	3	100	n/a	100	n/a	9.3	n/a
Mathematics	48	100	87	54	43	6.68	5.8
Biology	30	97	88	33	34	5.59	5.2
Chemistry	48	100	90	44	43	6.26	5.9
Physics	29	97	88	66	40	7.31	5.7
Other sciences (Psychology)	30	87	90	30	30	5.73	5.2
Design and technology	15	87	91	13	30	3.60	5.4
Business Studies	14	64	92	29	32	3.87	5.5
Business studies VCE	2	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	12.0	10.5
Economics	9	100	89	33	36	6.00	5.5
Computing	15	100	86	53	23	7.0	4.6
Information and communication technology VCE	5	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	13.2	10.0
Physical Education	9	67	92	11	25	2.67	5.1
Art and design	10	100	96	80	46	9.0	6.6
Drama	14	100	99	64	38	7.86	6.6
Media Studies	28	100	93	18	31	5.85	5.5
Music	1	100	93	100	35	10	5.7
Photography	6	100	n/a	100	n/a	9.3	n/a
Geography	9	89	92	44	38	5.33	5.7
History	21	81	88	19	35	4.26	5.5
Law	8	63	87	0	34	2.0	5.3
Psychology	30	87	87	30	34	5.73	5.3
Sociology	23	91	86	30	35	5.57	5.3
English	50	98	95	42	37	6.76	5.9
French	8	100	89	25	38	4.00	5.9
German	5	100	91	40	40	6.00	5.8

National figures for some small A-level subjects are grouped. This means that comparisons for subjects such as law, psychology, design and technology, media studies and drama are compared to a group of subjects at national level.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES GROUPED IN CURRICULUM AREAS

MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES

67. The focus was on mathematics, chemistry, and physics, but the mathematics GCSE retake course, biology and electronics were also sampled.
- In the GCSE retake course, 35 per cent of students gained a C grade or better. Results were similar in 2002. The lesson seen was good
 - In biology, 2001 results were above national averages. There are no national comparisons for 2002 but results at this stage are not quite as good as 2001. The lesson seen was judged to be good.
 - In electronics, there were no entries for examinations in 2001. In 2002 14 candidates took AS level. Of these, nearly 30 per cent gained A or B grades, but more than half were unsuccessful. The lesson seen was judged to be good.

Mathematics

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

Strengths

- A-level standards are well above average and students achieve well.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and ensure that students are well prepared for their examinations.
- Gifted mathematicians achieve very well because they are well taught and have very good independent learning skills.

Areas for improvement

- In a number of lessons, teachers adopt too narrow a range of teaching strategies to wholly meet the needs of students of all attainment levels.

68. The A-level results in 2001 were high compared with the national average and students achieved well. In 2002, they were nearer the previous year's national average. A-level results were well above average in 1999 and average in 2000. This variation in standards is related mainly to the differing standards of students on entry to courses in successive years and it is linked to the significant number of external students who are admitted to sixth form courses. For example, in 2002 there was a higher proportion of students beginning their AS studies with B or C grades at GCSE intermediate level. The results in the AS-level examinations have been similar to those at A level. Overall, male and female students have achieved well over the past four years. Retention rates for students completing their mathematics courses are above average.
69. In the current sixth form, A-level standards are well above average. Students' achievement is good in relation to their GCSE results. Students learn well, work hard and support and help each other well. Higher attainers who begin the course with an A* GCSE grade invariably achieve an A grade at A level. Students generally achieve higher standards in pure mathematics and in the statistics elements of the course than in mechanics. Algebraic skills are used effectively in calculus and students differentiate and integrate a wide range of functions efficiently. In a lesson on the Newton-Raphson method, students made very good gains in understanding by building on their previous work on iterative formulae. Work is generally well presented and shows step by step solutions of problems, which is good practice.
70. Teaching is good and students are eager learners. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and plan their lessons well. Assessment is thorough and students have an accurate knowledge of the standards they are achieving and what they must do to improve. Teachers present information quickly and clearly and students are expected to be alert and analytical in their response. The general approach of exposition followed by problem solving is better suited to higher attainers than

to those entering the course with B or C grades at GCSE; the latter occasionally find the pace of lessons too fast for them. For example, in a lesson on generating the general equation of a circle, a group of students struggled with the concept of a general equation. Higher attainers in the same lesson made very good progress. There is limited evidence of teaching that responds particularly to the needs of different groups during a lesson. Most students initially find it difficult to adjust from their GCSE courses to the different demands of the A-level course. Homework is set very well; it extends classwork and often takes the form of structured questions.

71. Management of the subject is good. The head of department is quietly effective and leads a large team of highly qualified mathematicians well. There is a positive ethos for learning in the department and a commitment to building on what has been achieved. Turnover of staff has been relatively high in the past three years. Despite this the department has maintained high standards because it has a continuing priority on supporting and monitoring newly appointed teachers. Resources and the application of new technology in course work are good. The above average standards in A-level results have been maintained since the last inspection.

Chemistry

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

Strengths

- A-level examination results are consistently above average and achievement is good
- Staff motivate students well and assessment is well used
- There are very high quality relationships between staff and students which help to establish a good learning atmosphere; students are enthusiastic and determined
- A well-led team shares the commitment to the best possible results for each student

Areas for improvement

- Lower-attaining students are too passive in oral work.
- The reference material in the library and flexible learning areas needs reviewing and updating.

72. In 2001, all candidates gained a grade, and almost one third of them reached the higher A/B grades. The provisional results for 2002 improved the numbers gaining A and B grades, and although the number of A – E grades fell slightly, they are likely to remain above the national average. The results for the AS level in 2001 were well above average for both A – E and A/B grades, and the provisional results for 2002 maintain this standard. For both 'A' level and AS level students, progress since their GCSE examinations has been good. Retention rates during the A/S course are much higher for males students than for females, but students leaving the course tend to do so at the start. Once students have found their feet, they persevere. About two-thirds of the students completing Year 12 decided to continue to the full A-level exam. There are few perceptible differences in the work of male and female students in the laboratories.
73. Standards of work of the current sixth form are above average and have been achieved through steady student effort and good teaching. Year 12 students are becoming accustomed to the different demands and requirements of the A/S course, particularly for the need for independent working. They are becoming more self-reliant, and aware of the need for self-discipline and careful planning in order that deadlines can be met. Their written work contains plenty of detail, and they are gradually learning to edit their notes and to concentrate on essentials. Graph work and diagrams improve steadily through the course. Students often make commendable efforts to enhance their notes with additional material, and internet sources are well used. Progress for these students is steady and satisfactory at this early stage. Students in their second year of the course are achieving well. Their practical skills have developed steadily and they perform complicated sequences of tasks competently and confidently. They work well independently, as was demonstrated in preparing samples of the drug antifebrin while being assessed for their practical skills. They co-operate well in pairs or small groups, helping each other and sharing ideas and results willingly. Discussions are particularly well mannered and well argued. Notes are lucid, detailed, and well illustrated, with correct scientific vocabulary being used confidently.

74. Teaching and learning are good. Four lessons were judged good and the fifth excellent. Teaching their own specialism, staff can give full rein to their enthusiasm and commitment to their subject, and these raise motivation and interest amongst their students. An unusual approach or the fascination of a topic can raise performance above what the teacher might normally expect, and one such Year 12 lesson involved fairly simple chemistry in the study of the reactions of marble. However, the unconventional tactic of investigating a cycle of reactions that involved quicklime, slaked lime, lime water and chalk, together with many historical and domestic applications, totally absorbed the attentions of the students and they gained far more than a knowledge of the mere chemistry. Good planning, a brisk pace, a variety of activities and plenty of challenge all contribute to interesting lessons with the result that students tackle tasks enthusiastically, and with a healthy competition to achieve acceptable results. The very high quality of staff-student relationships and the supportive nature of small-group teaching establishes a positive and encouraging atmosphere in which most students can learn well and enjoy their lessons. However, lower attaining students tend to be very passive in oral work of any sort, and they need to become more involved in order to demonstrate their understanding. The use of tests at the end of units of work and the on-going assessment and monitoring are valued by students, and detailed knowledge of their students enables staff to give support where it is needed.
75. Leadership and management are good. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good, with increasing numbers of students and better results. Both courses are well planned and use the available resources effectively. Labs are bright and cheerful with colourful displays of reference material. However, the smaller of the pair of labs becomes uncomfortably crowded in practical work with groups of more than about sixteen students. Students speak well of their improved study and ICT facilities, but the extent of the reference material in the library area is limited and needs review and augmentation to support revision and research for the numbers of students there are.

Physics

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

Strengths

- Examination results are well above national averages and achievement is good
- There is a committed and enthusiastic team of teachers and staff-student relationships are of a very high quality
- Good leadership and management gives staff and students a sense of direction, and students are well supported by the assessment and monitoring system
- Students are both determined and enthusiastic for their subject

Areas for improvement

- Some students are too reticent in oral work.
- Some minor aspects of the A/S scheme of work need reconsideration in order to minimise the repetition of GCSE work and to provide greater challenge.
- The library and learning centre book stocks need extending.

76. Advanced level results in 2001 were well above average. That nearly two thirds of candidates reached the higher grades A/B is especially commendable. Provisional results for 2002 seem likely to maintain the high A - E level, while the proportion of A/B grades has fallen back slightly to almost half the candidates. A/S results are similarly well above average and represent good progress from each of the previous years' GCSE results. The good 2002 results are despite staffing problems which have now been resolved, and they provide an encouraging base upon which students can build for the second half of the course.
77. The Year 12 work seen during the inspection was from the current Year 12 as well as that retained from the present Year 13. The standard rises from average at the beginning of the year to above average work later on as students have gained in understanding, experience and maturity. At the start of Year 12, about one third of students are from other schools, having had a variety of GCSE experiences, and this necessitates some thorough consolidation of earlier work. However, this can lead to 'marking time' for others. Student files show a growing appreciation of the need to 'edit' all

the information that they are given and the use of revision aids. Graphs and diagrams are of a good standard. In practical work, skills vary with the level of experimental work that has been done before, but confidence and competence grows steadily. Year 13 students show considerable maturity in the way in which they tackle complex work, helping each other over minor problems and sharing results and equipment. Numerically, teaching groups are heavily male-dominated, but in lessons there is little difference between the work of female and male students.

78. Despite any gaps that there might be in earlier knowledge or skills, students are enthusiastic and enjoy their lessons. They support each other well, and discussions are lively and well-mannered. Many students display a lively scientific curiosity and are not afraid to pose the 'what if' style of question when watching demonstrations. There is total integration within each group regardless of previous school, or background, and the harmony and co-operation within teaching groups is exceptional. As in the other disciplines within science, Year 13 students spoke highly of the way in which assessment and monitoring of their work supports and encourages them and enables them to see at an early stage, when more effort is needed to maintain their standards.
79. The overall standard of teaching in the subject is good. Such is the quality of relationships between students and their teachers that they are unafraid to ask for help and are confident that their needs will be met. However, the more reticent students need to take more part in oral work of all types so that they can demonstrate their understanding more fully, Teachers' command of the subject and enthusiasm for it are communicated to pupils and help to raise motivation and interest. Where groups are small more work is done faster and often to a greater depth than would be possible with larger classes. The overall result is a positive yet informal atmosphere in which good teaching leads seamlessly to good learning. Advanced physics often requires demonstration with complicated or expensive apparatus, but these demonstrations are used as a stimulus from which subsequent work flows, based on question and answer, and building entirely on student recall and responses. The increase in students' confidence at the end of such a session, when they realise that they have absorbed and understood a difficult concept, is tangible. An example of this was a Year 13 group watching a demonstration with an electron diffraction tube and then, after taking a few fairly crude measurements, deriving the separation between the atoms in a crystal of graphite and finding their answer was comparable with the accepted text-book value. They also enjoyed doing it !
80. The good teaching and learning and the high standard of examination results stem partly from good teamwork, but are also the result of good leadership and management. The same cramped conditions that exist for experimentation in the smaller chemistry lab also exist in the physics department, but are overcome by good laboratory discipline and consideration for each other by the students. New ICT facilities that will greatly enhance learning and allow greater student participation are about to be installed. With rising student numbers, examination results being maintained at a high level and improving facilities, improvement since the previous inspection has been good. However, there is a need for more up-to-date and extended resources for revision and research for present student numbers.

ENGINEERING, DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING

81. The focus was on the product design course in design and technology.

Design and technology: product design

Overall, the quality of provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

Strengths

- The teachers' subject knowledge and knowledge of the course syllabus and success criteria results in students being well prepared for coursework and examinations
- The wide range of resource material introduced in lessons broadens students' awareness and impacts positively on their learning

Areas for improvement

- Written assessment is brief so does not provide students with enough guidance on how to improve
- The pace of teaching in some lessons is slow and results in a pedestrian approach to learning

82. Standards in 2001 were significantly lower than national standards at A Level and lower than the previous two years. An analysis of progress of pupils showed that achievement was unsatisfactory. A change to the course was made and provisional results in 2002 are better than 2001. Attainment of boys is significantly better than that of the few girls entering the course. Retention rates are good with a very small proportion of students leaving the course except at the end of Year 12.
83. The standards on entry of the current Year 13 were higher than the current Year 12. The standard of practical work of current students in Year 13 is above average, and achievement is satisfactory. Students' coursework shows good attention to detail and effective use of a wide range of resource material for research. The standard of design and graphical communication and the quality of manufacture and finish of artefacts are also above average. Year 13 students are able to articulate the processes involved in their tasks. Students use resources produced by the teachers, from the Internet and books to research architecture and those in Year 12 are starting to develop their designing beyond the standards expected of GCSE. They are reflecting on their work. They confidently discussed the difficulties that they encountered when producing their radios as a result of having little experience of resistant materials at Key Stage 4. The current Year 12 is appropriately following a skills course in order to overcome this and improve their making skills.
84. The quality of teaching is overall satisfactory with regular good elements. Teachers are well prepared for their lessons with a wide range of source material produced so that students are able to work independently. Good use is made of previous students' work to ensure that the current students are aware of the standards they are expected to reach. Teachers' subject knowledge is good, as is their knowledge of the examination syllabus and assessment criteria. This is used to provide verbal feedback to the students and they act upon the guidance given. Planning is well developed and teachers who share groups continuously communicate, review and amend planning to ensure continuity. Students are usually enthusiastic but not always productive throughout the lessons, though this is difficult when lessons are two hours long. The pace in some lessons, or parts of lessons is slow and teachers' questioning does not provide sufficient challenge to move students on. The result is a limited response from the students. An example of this was in a lengthy introduction to a lesson on industrial practices and batch/mass production.
85. Year 13 students are aware of their attainment and general targets for improvement to achieve a higher grade than that achieved at AS. However, there is little evidence of written assessment of work in progress. There is no clear grading structure for the assessment of pupils' work and although stated in the department's assessment policy, there is no evidence of written comments that guide the students to improve their standards.
86. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. There have been significant changes to the management of the department and teachers involved in the delivery of post 16 courses as well as the introduction of a new course at AS and A Level. This was an appropriate response to under-performance - it resulted in a departmental review of examination courses and a change to a syllabus that includes more reliance in course work. The course is well managed by an experienced teacher who is committed to improving attainment. The optional aspect of the syllabus is being reviewed with a likely outcome being a further change from Resistant Materials Technology to Graphics with Materials Technology. This would better suit the previous experience of most of the students opting for the course.

BUSINESS

87. The focus was on business studies and economics at A and AS level, but the VCE business studies course was also sampled.
- In the last few years only a very small number of students have taken the VCE. National comparisons are difficult because of low numbers, but results were broadly average in Year 13 in 2001, and well above average the year before. However, in both 2001 and 2002 most of the small number of students in Year 12 failed to gain a pass at the equivalent of AS level. Eighteen students in Year 12 are on the course this year. The lesson seen was judged to be satisfactory.

The lesson had similar features to those observed in the A and AS level business studies course.

Business studies

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

Strengths

- Female students attain high standards because they enter the course with higher attainment and work hard.
- Teachers give very good support to students and this enables them to improve their knowledge and understanding of topics.

Areas for improvement

- The progress that students make is slow because teachers do not challenge them enough or provide enough variety in lessons.
- The quality of written work is lower than expected because students do not make enough use of knowledge of the business world.

88. The 2001 A-level results were well below average and below the average of what the students achieved in the other subjects that they studied. Female students attained much higher than male students and their results were much higher than female attainment nationally. The results have been well below average in recent years. However, most students complete the chosen course of study.
89. The standards of work of the current Year 12 and Year 13 are average. This represents satisfactory achievement given the standard of entry to the courses. Students know a range of business terms and use them well in written work. They write well-ordered, detailed notes on topics but in many cases, particularly for lower attaining students, understanding of topics such as how interest rates affect business is insecure. Higher attaining students however, particularly female students, show that they understand the likely effects of such changes in well explained written work. Students use their mathematical skills very well in learning. In Year 12 for example, they drew accurate graphs about the supply and demand for products, whilst in Year 13 they were able to calculate and compare loan repayments in business finance. Students are able to apply their knowledge to real business, such as in a Year 12 lesson when they developed answers through a study of the marketing of an ice cream product. The quality of work however, is reduced because students do not use knowledge of businesses enough in written work. Many students do not give enough attention to the analysis of information; writing is too descriptive and lacks explanation and evaluation. Consequently the work, particularly for lower attaining males, is not always of a sufficiently high standard. Students use computers to obtain information about companies, but there was limited evidence of their use in lessons or to develop and present assignments.
90. Teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject; they explain points clearly and this leads to students gaining a sound foundation of knowledge of topics. In a Year 12 lesson for example, good progress was made because the teacher gave clear, structured explanations about how products are categorised in a business and then consolidated learning through the active engagement of students in the lesson. This enabled students to grasp the principles quickly and apply their knowledge to real business. High attaining students showed very good understanding in the subsequent group presentations. In many lessons however, learning is not fully effective because the teacher talks for too long; there is little variety to stimulate interest, and they do not expect enough of students in discussion. Consequently the concentration of many students weakens and they do not learn enough. The timing of the components of lessons is not always effective and this results in teachers not having the time to ensure learning is fully effective through a summary session. Teachers use homework very well to extend learning and topics chosen are appropriate areas for study. They are relevant and enable students to consolidate understanding through research and independent work. Lower attaining students, including students with special educational needs make similar progress to others because they receive additional teacher support to help their learning. Teachers place emphasis on developing students acquisition of 'key skills', particularly number and many opportunities are provided for them through

assignments, but they are not gaining enough from the assessment of work because there is too little written evaluation of the content or correction of grammatical errors.

91. The leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The curriculum is linked to business practice but the schemes of work do not give sufficient information about the teaching of 'key' skills of literacy and ICT. The subject makes a good contribution to developing students awareness to the ethical responsibilities of business practice, but there is insufficient guidance given in the scheme of work. The guidance and support given to students is very good and this contributes to the good attitudes that they have to learning. Information is exchanged between teachers but the monitoring of teaching and learning is insufficiently focused on improving the challenge and expectation that teachers have of students.
92. The subject has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Female students have further improved their attainment at A level and teaching and learning continues at a satisfactory level. Overall A-level results continue to be well below the national average because many lower attaining students choose the course.

Economics

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

Strengths

- Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject
- Student attitudes are very positive
- The monitoring of student progress is very good.
- Students receive very good guidance for examination preparation.

Areas for improvement

- Teaching strategies need to be more varied, with further opportunities to support independent learning.
- The range of books available to the students should be increased.

93. In 2001 A-level results were above the national average. The percentage of students obtaining grades A to E was 100 per cent. This represents good achievement, though standards were slightly down on the previous two years. In the 2002 A-level results half of the candidates achieved A to B grades, though the average grades are similar to 2001. Overall the higher grades in the new AS examination improved in 2002 with 30 per cent obtaining A to B grades compared to 12 per cent in 2001. However, the overall A to E pass rate declined in 2002 from 94 per cent to 60 per cent, reflecting the wider intake in Year 12.
94. Standards in work of the current Year 13 are above average and match those in recent examination results. Most students have a good knowledge of topics such as barriers to entry, costs and benefits of economic growth and economic developments in a worldwide context, they were not so confident with price elasticity of demand. They are able to use complex economics terminology and can apply what they have learnt to case studies. The achievement of students is good and they make good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of concepts and applying what they have learnt to the real world. The majority of the Year 13 group have entered the Bank of England Target 2.5 project and this experience will underpin and develop their academic learning. In the best lessons students are highly involved with their own learning; they are able to develop their understanding by high level reasoning skills and by very impressive levels of concentration. Students are very positive towards the subject and several of those in Year 13 are planning to continue their studies at university. The department offers AS and A-level courses in economics and in 2002, 50 per cent of students continued from the AS course.
95. Overall the teaching in the department is good, but the lessons seen ranged from very good to satisfactory. Overall teachers have a very good knowledge of economics combined with very effective assessment procedures that support the progress of individual students. Where teaching is well planned and there are high expectations of the students then learning is good. However, in some lessons lesson planning needs to be improved and the aims and objectives more clearly shared with

the students. In some lessons there is a tendency to 'over teach' - to provide too much directed input. In a Year 13 class, student presentations on wage differences were overshadowed by intrusive teacher questioning and by teacher-generated notes. Further opportunities for independent learning need to be provided both within and outside the classroom to reflect the full range of students now studying the subject. Some use of ICT, as a research tool, by the higher achieving students is evident, and this needs to be encouraged particularly in the AS course. Students receive very good preparation for the examinations and there are many opportunities for students to practice data responses and to interpret case study material. They have a very good knowledge of their own learning and of the examination requirements and the good results at the end of Year 13, in particular, reflect the effective teacher input. Students respond very positively to this and are confident, particularly in Year 13, about their progress and development.

96. Economics is a subject within the business studies faculty and is satisfactorily co-ordinated by the head of faculty. There are regular departmental meetings and there is a departmental self- review structure that works well. Standards since the last inspection have been maintained and the new syllabi have been introduced successfully, although attention needs to be given to improving the consistency of teaching and the range of teaching styles across the subject. At present the students have access to limited range of modern economic reference books to supplement the good range of worksheets.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

97. The focus was on two courses – computing and information and communication technology VCE.

Computing

Overall, the quality of provision for computing is **very good**

Strengths

- The GCE A-level results are high and have improved since the last inspection.
- The quality of teaching is very good and this results in students achieving very well.
- The department is very well managed and this helps to increase the confidence of students to develop their skills.
- Very good assessment procedures keep students well informed of their achievements so that they are motivated to reach their target grades.

Areas for improvement

- With the increase in students choosing the course, current accommodation is restricting students' learning.

98. Results in the 2001 A-level computing examination were high in relation to the national average with all students passing, and 50 per cent gaining A or B grades. There was a good trend of improvement from 1999 to 2001. In 2002 the results were not as good, but all students passed and more than 30 per cent gained A or B grades. AS-level results were also not as good in 2002 as 2001, and in both years though there were significant numbers of A and B grades, there were also some failures. However, in both years the students at A and AS level achieved results that were significantly better than in other subjects they took. The course is increasing in popularity with over 90 Year 12 students choosing it in 2002. Retention rates are very good - the vast majority of students complete the AS courses. The results have improved since the last inspection.

99. The work of students seen in lessons, their projects and in conversations confirms that standards are overall high and achievement is very good. In Year 12 computing, students are able write simple algorithms and convert into PASCAL. They are also able to explain and provide examples of encryption, understand how to estimate file sizes using simple calculations. Teachers provide appropriate examples to develop the knowledge of students. Students work co-operatively in order to solve problems. They demonstrate good use of technical language and are able to use it in the correct context. Higher attaining students demonstrate a very good understanding of the principles of programming and are able to transfer skills between different programming languages.

100. The quality of teaching and learning are very good. Teachers are very supportive and do much to develop the confidence of students. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and they use questions to test students' knowledge and understanding of difficult concepts. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject, particularly in terms of examination specifications and assessment criteria. Students use the assessment criteria to check progress of their coursework and teachers use this to provide regular monitoring of student progress. This was evident when searching questions were asked of Year 13 computing students who were undertaking practical work on visual basic programming. Students who speak English as an additional language are integrated and actively participate in the lessons. They understand complex concepts such as floating point representation. They demonstrate their understanding by successfully completing the binary calculations.
101. Leadership and management of the course are very good. Courses are very well planned and this has helped the smooth transition to meet the demands of the new specifications. Teaching is organised so that students benefit from teachers' individual expertise and strengths. Teachers have worked collaboratively to develop their personal computing skills through appropriate training and support. Progress has been very good since the last inspection. Students are monitored regularly and additional monitoring reports are given to students to identify progress made. The department recognises the limitations that accommodation presents upon learning. They have adopted strategies to overcome this issue and are seeking ways to improve accommodation. The department is well supported with technical staff, which allows teachers to focus on the curriculum and teaching.

Information and communication technology VCE

Overall the quality of provision for information and communication technology VCE is **good**.

Strengths

- The results are high.
- The quality of teaching is good and this results in students achieving well.
- Good assessment procedures using grade related criteria
- Good support and opportunities provided for students to improve their coursework
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge.

Areas for Improvement

- Further opportunities for students to be involved in discussion should be provided.
- With the increase in students choosing the courses, current accommodation is restricting students' learning.

102. Information and communication technology VCE was introduced in 2001. That year, 94 per cent of students passed at the equivalent of AS level. In 2002 the pass rate was 100 per cent. The first cohort continuing with the second year of A level took exams in 2002. National comparisons are not yet available, but all passed with at least a D grade. Retention rates are good and in 2002 the number of students choosing the course has increased.
103. The current students' work is overall above average and achievement is good. Students in Year 12 designed and adapted business documents for their portfolios. They very quickly used the knowledge gained to analyse commercial documents in order to improve the presentation of their business documents. This was evident from their work on agendas and invoices. In year 13, students designed databases in preparation for their examination. They eloquently explained how they constructed and established the relationship between files in the database. Teachers do well to build the confidence of some quite hesitant students. However, more opportunity should be given to allow students to participate in discussion to enable them to share their knowledge and understanding. In small groups, students work very well together and are supportive of each other.
104. The quality of teaching and learning are good. Teachers are very supportive and do much to develop the confidence of students. Courses are very well planned and this has helped smooth the transition to meet the demands of the new specifications. Students reported that teachers are always ready to help. Year 13 ICT students were complimentary regarding the use of grade assessment criteria and

how they had used it to improve the quality of their work. Feedback to students is very clear and practical advice is given as to how grades might be improved. A number of opportunities are given to students to improve their coursework. Where lessons have pace and challenge students respond accordingly with work of a high standard. Higher attaining students are able to design and construct complicated databases. This was evident when searching questions were asked of Year 13 ICT students who were able to respond allowing them to further their understanding and knowledge of databases.

105. Leadership and management of the course are good. Improvement has been good since the last inspection, with the implementation of the new course. It has been well planned and resourced. Students are monitored regularly and they are provided with a number of opportunities to improve their coursework. The department makes good use of business resources and the Internet to provide examples of business documents. As for computing, there are limitations of accommodation that impact on learning, but teachers are very active in adapting teaching strategies to cope.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

106. The focus was on PE.

Physical education

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

Strengths.

- Students make very good progress in lessons and achieve very well in examinations. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which secures the quality of the excellent teaching and learning.
- There is very effective use of the full range of assessment data to support and underpin student performance and personal development.
- There is excellent leadership and management in the department.

Areas for improvement.

- There are no significant areas for improvement.

107. In 2001, standards at A-level were well below the national average for the subject, and below the average for the school. In 2002, results significantly improved and were well above expectation based on prior attainment. They were better than the average for the school. The change from 2001 to 2002 represents excellent improvement, and solid evidence suggests this will continue.
108. Standards seen in the work of A-level students in Year 13 are high. Students are able to analyse rotational movement along two axes, and can suggest realistic solutions to hypothetical sports psychology problems. Course work is very well presented and shows clear evidence of increasing subtlety of understanding. Achievement for this group is very good. In Year 12 lessons, students successfully meet the challenges set by very well planned and demanding teaching. They are able to classify activities as sport, leisure or game, and they can debate different reasons for their suggestions. Students have a good grasp of the technical vocabulary of the subject, and they take an active and increasingly effective part in discussions. Students of all ages possess good skills as independent learners when carrying out research individually or in small groups. Far more male students than females choose the subject, but the achievement of male and female students is broadly similar. All groups of students progress at similar rates.
109. A-level students have excellent attitudes. They work very harmoniously in groups when undertaking biomechanical and physiological studies. There is an ethos of generous and good-humoured mutual support and encouragement. Students are pleased with their choice of courses, and they feel secure about the support they will receive if and when that is required. They appreciate the value of the different personalities, and depth of expertise, of their teachers. Relationships are strong, based on mutual respect, and have a very positive effect on the quality of learning.

110. Teaching and learning are excellent. Lessons are very well prepared, with clear objectives, which consolidate and extend previous work. Teachers have very high expectations of their students and lessons move forward at a brisk pace. Written work is marked thoroughly with guidance for students on how to improve. The students pay close attention to guidance, and are prepared to work hard. Students respond well to questioning designed to test their depth of knowledge, and they show a clear understanding of anatomy and physiology, and the psychology of sport. They are expected to think for themselves. They give proper respect to each others' opinions, and are very tolerant of the different skills and attributes which they have as individuals.
111. Leadership and management are excellent. The teaching team is well balanced, energetic, and highly committed to the students. The subject leader has a clear sense of direction for the subject and has identified and addressed areas of weakness. Courses are now staffed by very knowledgeable highly qualified specialist teachers, and are organised on the basis of feedback from performance data analysis. Students' academic progress is tracked very effectively using information derived from the full range of marking opportunities, and lesson based formative assessments. The monitoring of teaching and learning is carried out regularly and well. Documentation is organised efficiently and effectively and work programmes are detailed. Resources for learning are generous. There are a great many extra curricular activities on offer.
112. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Standards have risen spectacularly, and numbers taking the subject are rising steadily. The level of understanding is extremely good, and written work is very well presented. This is a department of exceptional all round quality, which contributes strongly to the ethos and achievement of the school.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

113. The focus was on art and on drama and theatre studies, but media studies was also sampled.
- Examination results for media studies were average in 2001. Results for 2002 were not quite as good, but national comparisons are not yet available. The lesson seen was judged to be satisfactory.

Art

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

Strengths

- A-level results have been consistently well above average in recent years, often in the top 5 per cent nationally, and achievement is very good.
- Teachers are very clear about what students need to do to attain very high standards and communicate the principles of art in a convincing and engaging way.
- The thoroughly good management of the A-level course ensures that staff and students alike know what they have to do to ensure very high quality learning.

Areas for improvement

- There are no significant areas for improvement. The department has a development plan which accurately identifies the few minor areas that could be improved.

114. The art department offers A-level courses in art and design with endorsed courses in fine art and photography. The A-level results in 2001 were in the top five per cent of schools nationally, with most students attaining an A or B grade. Students regularly perform better in art than they do in their other subjects. This very high level of performance, which results from very good teaching and the high motivation of students, has been a consistent feature of the department's work in recent years. In 2002, all students gained an A or B grade. This remarkable accomplishment is even better than the previous year's results. Students' achievement is very good when comparing their attainment at GCSE to their standards at A level. All students in 2001 and 2002 exceeded their predicted grades, most by a high margin. There are no differences between the performances of male and female students or between different ethnic groups and all students make very good progress irrespective of their individual starting points.

115. The standards of work of current students are high in both Year 12 and Year 13. Students in Year 13 produce visually dramatic work that is successfully supported by thorough research into the work of artists and styles. In one lesson, for instance, students were studying a painting by a recognised master to decipher the more symbolic elements within the picture. This required them to see beyond the obvious. They then profitably applied this knowledge to their own work. Students make very good use of sketchbooks to research and experiment with different media as they reflect on work in progress, with useful commentaries and explanations that provide a context for their practical work. Students are challenged to understand how art reflects social and political realities. In one very successful photography lesson, for instance, a student was studying how film and photography has historically succumbed to insidious forms of gender stereotyping. As a result, the student was reflecting on ways of counteracting this perverse trend in her own work.
116. In Year 12, students rapidly improve the depth of their understanding across a range of media and begin to produce work that is increasingly subtle but always technically proficient. For instance, Year 12 students, who in an earlier lesson had completed drawings of natural forms with representational accuracy and very good tonal contrast, were now fully absorbed as they took a small segment of one of the drawings to represent on a larger scale using an ink wash and brush. The change of media and size meant that they successfully interpreted their original precise drawings on an entirely bolder and more adventurous scale. The results were compelling and vivid. A relative weakness being addressed by the department is the insufficient use of computerized applications that results in some students not being fully prepared for the technologically intensive nature of contemporary arts industries.
117. Teaching is very good overall and students are quick to learn as a result. The A-level course is methodically planned with very good tracking of individual students' progress. This is done through an effective tutorial system that ensures attention to each student's particular needs. As a result, students' learning is systematic and individualized. Teachers have a purposeful and businesslike approach that encourages a serious and mature attitude to learning. High expectations result in high standards and those who drop behind are immediately given learning support to ensure they retrieve the lost ground. Students' work is thoroughly assessed and graded so that they have clear ideas of what they must do to achieve even higher grades. This ensures that learning has a momentum and immediacy with no opportunity for students to squander time. Clear guidelines and boundaries successfully encourage students to be ambitious and well organised. Students overall attitudes to work are excellent. There is urgency to learning as students grapple with new ideas and opportunities in a single-minded and earnest way.
118. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. Procedures are thoroughly well prepared and staff and students alike feel valued and supported. The pervasive atmosphere of purposeful engagement, which is based on supportive relationships between staff and students, promotes very high levels of performance. The accommodation is suitable and there are good resources for learning, with the exception of computers. At the time of the last inspection there was a concern at the lack of studio space. However, during the inspection students had sufficient access to the art rooms in their non-contact time and made good use of this provision. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

Drama and theatre studies

Overall, the quality of provision for drama and theatre studies is **very good**

Strengths:

- Students' attainment is high and achievement very good, particularly in performance skills
- Teachers' enthusiasm, knowledge and understanding of the subject leads to very good learning
- The level of guidance and support given to all students is very good
- Students' personal and social development is very good and so are their opportunities for a wider appreciation of the subject.

Areas for improvement:

- Lower attaining students need a more structured framework for writing their essays.
- Students would benefit from being taught by more than one teacher.

119. Standards in AS and A level drama and theatre studies are high. Although examination results have fluctuated, attainment at A-level in 2001 was well above the national average and standards have been maintained in 2002. Achievement based on prior attainment is very good with all students in recent years being awarded A to D grades. More girls than boys attain the highest grades. The numbers choosing to follow advanced courses is increasing. About one third of these students have no experience of GCSE drama, and nearly 20 per cent of students drop out of the AS-level course in the first few weeks. However, retention for the rest of the year is maintained and students achieve very well. In 2002 55 per cent of students proceeded to the A2 course (the second year of the A level)..
120. Standards are also well above average for the current sixth form. Through discussion and rehearsal, Year 13 students working on devised performance demonstrate a growing awareness of the need to work with purpose and discipline. They are able to establish workshop techniques and performance rituals. By the end of a lesson they are able to distil a range of ideas based on a visual stimulus to a single theme and prepare an improvisation using sound, movement and gesture. Year 12 students demonstrate very good ensemble performances. They are inventive; they all use space well communicating character through gesture and facial expression; movement is expressive and disciplined. They can employ a range of drama techniques such as freeze-frame, narrator in role and internal monologue.
121. In their writing, high attaining students show excellent analysis of different ways playwrights use language to create an impact on an audience. They are able to make clear directorial decisions and they show very good understanding of the visual and spatial elements of theatre. Low attaining students show a weaker understanding of form and structure. Although they make references these are not always developed to inform their commentary. They also show less understanding of the period context of plays and do not explore the impact of a play upon the audience sufficiently. However, all students show evidence of progress and the most recent work of lower attaining students is more coherent and better organised.
122. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. A very strong feature, particularly at the start of the year is that teachers encourage students to identify for themselves where they need to improve. Consequently Y13 students identified a need to work with more purpose and urgency on devised improvisations and to make their initial discussion more focused. The teacher's own energy, his insistence on students' employing warm-up techniques, and his provision of suggested, generic themes as a basis for any improvisation ensured a more purposeful and systematic approach. Teachers also set theatrical problems for students to resolve, demanding that they use initiative and employ a range of learned techniques. For example Year 12 students at the start of a lesson identified a problem of understanding the language of a complex Jacobean text: Middleton's "Women Beware Women". The teacher challenged them to work, in groups, selecting lines that typified the main characters, and presenting the lines through a series of tableaux. The challenge was increased as the teacher invited students to invent lines to show the inner thoughts of each character. By the end of the lesson all the students had a clear understanding of the themes and emotions conveyed in the text and the contrast between characters' external actions and dialogue and their hidden thoughts.

123. Students are given very good guidance and encouragement and they appreciate the availability of teachers after school to help them, particularly in their preparations for performance work. They are also provided with very supportive background reading. Students are strongly encouraged to widen their experience of theatre. There are strong links with professional theatre groups who run workshops and visits to London productions. These experiences inform the students' own performances and understanding. For example, one student was very inventive in adopting the Brechtian technique of commenting on the action as a narrator in role, benefiting from a recent visit to *The Threepenny Opera*. The marking of students' written work is detailed with very clear indications of how to improve. However, low-attaining students would benefit from more structures and frameworks, and more teacher intervention during the writing process rather than after completion.
124. The subject is well led and managed. Examination results are carefully analysed and there is a clear improvement plan based on need. Teachers have attended useful in-service training to prepare for new courses and have also taken opportunities to work with directors and others from the professional theatre. Although Year 13 students are given opportunities to experience other methods and interpretations from visiting drama specialists, they would benefit from being taught regularly by more than one teacher. The head of department is aware of this and has ensured that the teaching is shared in Year 12. Resources are good. There is a purpose-built drama studio and other rehearsal spaces and students are given good opportunities to use sound and lighting techniques. Very good improvement since the last inspection has been sustained.

HUMANITIES

125. The focus was on history and psychology, but geography, philosophy, religious studies and sociology were also sampled.
- Results in geography were average in 2001, but were significantly higher in 2002. The lesson seen was very good.
 - There were no entries for A or AS level philosophy in 2001 at Graveney. 18 candidates took AS level in 2002 of whom 89 per cent passed, but national comparisons are not yet available. The lesson seen was good.
 - There were no entries for A level religious studies in 2001 at Graveney. All pupils entered for religious studies passed in 2002, but numbers were very small. The lesson seen was good.
 - Results in sociology were average in 2001, and standards were broadly maintained in 2002. The lesson seen was good.

History

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

Strengths

- The teaching is very good overall and results in students' very positive attitudes.
- There is excellent teacher knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject.
- The monitoring of student progress is very good.
- The subject is well managed.

Areas for improvement

- Further opportunities to use ICT for independent research should be provided.
- The book resources need to be strengthened.

126. In the 2001 examination standards were below the national average both for those students achieving A to B grades and A to E grades. Overall students achieved half a grade less than their GCSE scores suggested. Achievement was therefore inadequate. However, with the introduction of the new AS syllabus in 2001 there has been a substantial improvement. Two thirds of the students achieved A to B grades with boys achieving better than girls. This change has continued in 2002

with further improvement in the AS examination and with 10 out of 14 students securing the highest two grades at A level. This represents good achievement.

127. Observations of lessons and a scrutiny of samples of students work confirm that currently standards are above average. This is consistent with the results of 2002 and affirms that students in history are now making good progress. The introduction of the new AS and A2 syllabi and a review of the monitoring arrangements for student progress have led to a discernable improvement in student success. Year 12 students can with confidence analyse the impact of the emancipation of the Russian serfs. Year 13 students, in discussing the collectivisation of the farms in the Stalin period are able to challenge each other, and very effectively present extensive group research in a dynamic way. The level of debate is excellent. The interrogation of documentary evidence and the development of the historical arguments are most impressive. The current Year 13 are achieving well, in line with the department's rising trend of success.
128. Students are learning very well and their progress is strongly supported by the quality of the teaching in the department. Overall the teaching is very good with some excellent features. The teaching team is very experienced and teachers have excellent subject knowledge that they share readily with the students. They are scholarly and enthusiastic and have prepared carefully for the new syllabi. This hard work has had a very positive impact upon student recruitment and upon the commitment that the students show to their studies. Lessons are, in the main, stimulating and exciting and students are given very good opportunities to development their understanding of history. There are very effective question and answer sessions with all students involved. The pace of learning is challenging particularly in Year 13. Teachers have very high expectations of the students and they respond very positively to the challenges presented to them. In the very best lessons observed the pace of learning is impressive. Students are being constantly challenged to extend their learning and the commitment of the students to the subject is very high. Marking is very thorough and the comments give strong support to the students strengthening their work. Some teachers, in order to develop essay-writing skills and to encourage personal research, help students to use information technology well. This good practice needs to be extended throughout the whole department.
129. The monitoring of progress has been reviewed in the last year and students have a good idea about their strengths and gaps in their knowledge. There are clear strategies for improvement and the students are given thorough examination preparation. Year 12 students were observed developing three different levels of answer to a 1931 National Government question.
130. The department is well led by an experienced head of department who has encouraged the staff to prepare thoroughly for the new syllabi, with great success. He has reviewed past practice and introduced new approaches to improve student learning, particularly in the monitoring of individual learning needs. The schemes of work have been rewritten to include book and other source material. The recent changes have resulted in a striking improvement in standards, and overall improvement since the last inspection has been good. The high quality teaching that is currently taking place indicates that the improvement in achievement is likely to continue. However, the change of courses has put considerable pressure upon the book range, which is narrow at the present time. The book stock needs to be reinforced.

Psychology

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

Strengths

- Teaching is good
- The curriculum is broad and well balanced
- Assessment and tracking of students' progress is thorough and systematic
- Leadership and management are good

Areas for improvement

- The pace and challenge of teaching are not consistently high
- Monitoring of teaching is not sufficiently focused on subject specific teaching to be fully effective in ensuring consistency

131. Psychology was introduced into the sixth form in 1999 and the subject has rapidly grown in popularity with 30 candidates at A level in 2001, and 36 in 2002. The numbers currently following A2 and AS level show a continuing trend of growth. Retention rates on the courses are good. Standards are average at the end of both Years 12 and 13. This is shown in the examination results over the last two years, and in the work of current students. The current work shows distinct trends of improvement especially for higher attaining students. Students' achievement is satisfactory overall when compared with their earlier GCSE results, but some, many of whom were targeted to achieve a grade C, did not do well as expected in the 2002 A2 examinations. The school attributes this to the lack of continuity in teaching, because of staffing difficulties, during the AS course. Teaching is now good, and the recent significant improvement in its quality is having a positive impact on students' learning, also now good; it has not yet had time to impact fully on standards and achievement.
132. Students develop good knowledge and understanding of a wide range of psychological perspectives and methods, and learn to compare their usefulness. Year 12 students for instance, made rapid progress in understanding the strengths and weaknesses of models designed to test short term memory. They also become confident in their analysis of the application of psychological theories, as shown by Year 13 students in their comparison and application of the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky in education. Similar strengths are reflected in students' written work which, in the case of higher attaining students especially, is very well structured and presented. Reports of investigations are written in a scientific style. They are logically organised, use appropriate terminology and, at best, come to clear and evaluative conclusions. Psychological theorists are quoted accurately in support of evidence, and reports show a good understanding of ethical considerations in psychological experiments. The work of lower attaining students tends to over simplify some of the more complex psychological view points, to be less detailed in explaining and clarifying ideas and to be less well structured and presented.
133. Some teaching seen on the inspection was of a very high quality and none was less than satisfactory. Students benefit from being taught by highly qualified teachers who are deeply committed to improving standards. They respond very well to the high level of challenge and pace that typifies most lessons, and enables them to work at full stretch intellectually. Lessons have clear objectives and are well structured, with a range of activities that meet course requirements very well. In most lessons, students are challenged to think in depth by skilled and searching questioning, and group work is planned effectively to enable students to explore issues in depth. There are a few however, where questioning is not used enough to challenge and develop pupils' thinking, there is too little targeted challenge and support of group work, and too much time is given for relatively undemanding tasks such as copying. The strong focus on the comparison of different psychological perspectives is common to all teaching, and is very effective in enhancing students' knowledge and capacity to evaluate relative strengths and weaknesses. Reference to the methods and experiments of different researchers is skilfully interwoven into the teaching. Students enjoy the opportunities to explore these in practical work as in a Year 12 lesson, where their practical involvement in a test on working memory, deepened their understanding of the nature and shortcomings of the test.
134. Learning in lessons is consistently well supported by homework assignments planned as an integral part of learning. Research is well supported by up-to-date materials, and by the very strong encouragement for the use of the Internet. Literacy and numeracy skills are very strongly supported through their constant use. Students' progress is monitored closely through systematic assessment procedures that are well integrated into teaching and learning. The on-going marking of students' work is more variable in quality especially in the provision of guidance for improvement.

135. The significant improvements in the provision for psychology result from the enthusiastic leadership, vision and management of the newly appointed head of department. Working in close partnership with the other psychology teacher, he is providing a very clear direction for work in psychology, and his significant achievements in a very short time are reflected in students' enthusiasm and signs of improving standards. Prior to this, monitoring of teaching took place mainly through the general school performance management.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

136. The focus was on English A and AS level and on French, but the English GCSE retake course and German were also sampled.
- In the English GCSE retake course, 39 per cent of students gained a C grade or better. This figure increased to 47 per cent in 2002. The lesson seen was good.
 - In German, A-level results were average in 2001. No candidates were entered in 2002 – German and Spanish usually alternate. The lesson seen was good.

English

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

Strengths:

- Students' attainment is high and achievement very good.
- Teachers' enthusiasm, knowledge and understanding of the subject lead to very good learning.
- Support and guidance for all students are very good.
- There are very good opportunities for students' personal development within lessons and through curriculum extension.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.

Areas for improvement:

- Although teaching is consistently stimulating, ensure that sufficient time is left, even when students are engrossed, to consolidate learning.
- Ensure reticent students are more actively involved, especially at the start of Year 12.

137. Standards in English literature are high. Large numbers of students opt for the subject and results in 2001 at A level were well above the national average. Though there are no national comparisons yet, 2002 results are of a similar level at both A and AS level.
138. All advanced level students show high levels of literary appreciation and respond well to complex and challenging texts. For example, all students in Year 13 studying Webster's *Duchess of Malfi* showed very good understanding of character, motivation and the social and historical context of the play. High attaining students show a detailed understanding of texts and writers' use of language. They demonstrate excellent skills of analysis and synthesis. For example, one student was able to compare and contrast the essentially destructive nature of the relationships explored in D H Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* with the poetry of Ted Hughes in *Birthday Letters*. He demonstrated a clear personal response, cogently argued. Lower attaining students also rise to the challenge of demanding reading, but tend not to develop their arguments as coherently, nor analyse language in as much depth.
139. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers give a very clear indication of the learning objectives and establish a clear context for a lesson within a unit of study. There are very good opportunities for student initiative and personal research. There are also high expectations that students will read widely and independently around a topic. Stimulating resources arouse students' curiosity and sense of enquiry. For example, Year 12 students reading Pre-Raphaelite poetry and who were researching Victorian values and attitudes were invited to look at and discuss a selection of Pre-Raphaelite paintings. They could begin to make links between their research, the symbolism and iconography in the paintings, and the themes and imagery of the poetry, thus establishing a deeper understanding. Students are also given very clear guidance on how to structure their essays and how marking is related to the course's assessment objectives. They know precisely how well

they have done and what they need to do to improve. There are expectations that all students will use ICT both for word-processing essays and using the Internet for research.

140. Lessons are consistently stimulating, but there is a need on occasions for teachers to allow sufficient time to consolidate learning by drawing the threads of discussion together before the lesson ends, no matter how engrossed the students are. There is also a need in some lessons, particularly at the start of advanced courses, to vary the teaching approach, more actively to involve reticent students. Nevertheless, students' attitudes to the subject are very positive. They are very well informed about literature and appreciate the availability of staff ready to help them. They also appreciate the many opportunities within and beyond lessons to be creative, to attend writing workshops and to meet poets and other writers nationally recognised.
141. Very good improvement since the last inspection has been sustained. The subject is very well led and there is a very clear improvement plan based on the analysis of need. The department is aware that girls did less well in the A2 synoptic exam based on First World War literature and has taken measures to increase understanding of historical and social context.

French

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

Strengths

- Very good teaching leads to very good learning.
- Both electronic and printed resources are very good and contribute to students' ability to work independently,
- The climate for learning is improved by the presence of four native speakers of French, two teachers and two *assistantes*.
- There are good opportunities for work experience in France

Area for improvement

- There are no significant areas for improvement. The department has a development plan which accurately identifies the few minor areas that could be improved.

142. The A-level results in 2001 were below the national average, though not so far below as official figures would indicate, because one of two students who achieved grade A was not counted. In fact two of the eight candidates gained grade A, the others gaining D or E grades. These results were exceptionally low compared to other years, because the class of 2001 consisted mainly of students who had not come up through the school. In the same year over half the students in Year 12 gained a grade A or B in AS level. In 2002, A-level results were much better: all passed and seven of the twelve students obtained a grade A or B. At AS level a majority, nine out of fifteen, gained grade A or B. The outcomes in spoken French were a strength. 12 of these students continued to A level. It is rare for any student to drop out.
143. Standards of work of the current Year 12 are above average, and there is little to distinguish the committed A-level candidates from those who are taking French as a one year course to complement their studies in mathematics or science subjects. These latter represent a growth point for the department, which has necessitated the provision of two parallel groups in Year 12. Students' productive skills speaking and writing are developing well in response to specific teaching that aims to extend their range of expression. For example in two lessons observed, students were required to come up with a number of alternatives for yes and no, as might be used in different situations. They are deeply interested in learning about France through the medium of French, for instance in discussion of young people's rights and responsibilities in a different socio-cultural situation from their own. In another lesson, culture in a different sense was being developed as students listened to and discussed in French popular music from the French-speaking world. In relation to GCSE this is good achievement for highly qualified students. Male students, a minority, are amongst the most fluent contributors. The work of current Year 13 students is closer to average standards in relation to what is seen in sixth forms generally, though their good achievement at AS level could indicate higher standards to come. Their overall

achievement is good because they are well organised and well motivated to work independently. They are already able to take notes in French and to do research using the Internet, for example to look up websites of French organisations dealing with AIDS.

144. Teaching is very good, because it is very well planned and resourced and is specifically focused on the learning needs of students. These are recognised by rigorous assessment, which is used not only to set targets but also to support students in reaching them. The climate for learning is very good, since fluent French is frequently heard as the medium of instruction and conversation. Relationships are very good and reflect a high degree of maturity on the part of the students. Tolerance is implicit in their various activities. The two French *assistantes*, one from Paris and the other from Guadeloupe, were not yet in post at the time of the inspection, but their predecessors had made a valuable contribution in writing and recording materials which students use in the department's multimedia room. All this makes a good impact on learning, leading to a high level of interest and concentration in lessons.
145. The very good teaching and learning result from work in the subject being very well led and managed. Sixth form work is separately managed from work in the main school, but the two staff responsible collaborate to good effect. The fact that there are now three students taking Spanish as well as French has depended on developments in Year 10 that are now being extended to Year 8. The department has coped very well with the demands of new course requirements at AS and A level. Outcomes are exhaustively analysed and attention given in consequence to students needing support. A new scheme of work strongly supports teaching and learning. Since the previous inspection there has been good improvement because numbers of students have risen substantially without loss of quality. One-year AS-level courses involve a completely new constituency. Very high standards of teaching and learning have been maintained.