

# INSPECTION REPORT

**THE HENRIETTA BARNETT SCHOOL**

LONDON

LEA area: Barnet

Unique reference number: 101354

Headteacher: Ms Jacquelyn Pain

Lead inspector: Barbara Hilton

Dates of inspection: 17 - 21 November 2003

Inspection number: 259156

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar (selective)
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of students:	11-18
Gender of students:	Female
Number on roll:	734
School address:	Central Square Hampstead Garden Suburb LONDON
Postcode:	NW11 7BN
Telephone number:	020 8458 8999
Fax number:	020 8455 8900
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Ms Francesca Barnes
Date of previous inspection:	2 March 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Henrietta Barnett School is an 11-18 non-denominational voluntary aided grammar school. The school is very heavily oversubscribed. On entry in Year 7 and in the sixth form students' attainment is very high: students are selected on the results of entrance examinations for Year 7 and of very high GCSE grades for the sixth form. About half the students are local to the school and the rest travel from boroughs around the north-west of London. They come from about 60 primary schools and from a wide range of backgrounds. White British students and students of Indian heritage background each comprises about one fifth of the total number and the rest is made up of smaller numbers from a variety of minority ethnic groups. While about one-third of students is bilingual, none is at an early stage of learning English, which is a much lower proportion than nationally. Few students have special educational needs and these are mostly for dyslexia or medical reasons; none has learning difficulty. Mobility is low. Sixth form teaching in design and technology and information and communication technology (ICT) is shared with Christ's College, a nearby boys' comprehensive school. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well below average. The school, while smaller than most nationally, is bigger than at the last inspection, mainly because of increase in the sixth form which, with 271 students, is bigger than in most schools. Nearly all Year 11 students stay on, and they are joined by students from other schools. The trustees of the school have owned the premises for four years and share them with Hampstead Garden Suburb Institute. The school was named by a national Sunday newspaper as School of the Year in 2002, and as the top secondary school in Greater London in 2003.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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9561	Husain Akhtar	Lay inspector	
23588	Charanjit Ajitsingh	Team inspector	History Religious education
31218	Tom Allen	Team inspector	Geography
24142	Sylvia Argyle	Team inspector	Art
8216	Geoffrey Binks	Team inspector	English English as an additional language
10391	Valerie du Plergny	Team inspector	Drama Music Special educational needs
10060	David Gutmann	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (sixth form) Sociology
27240	William Hooper	Team inspector	Classical civilisation Latin Citizenship
19925	Margaret Price	Team inspector	Mathematics
20420	Stuart Rawcliffe	Team inspector	Science
10288	John Richards	Team inspector	Design and technology Information and communication technology
23030	Caroline Runyard	Team inspector	Physical education
4829	Ian Waters	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages (French and German)

The inspection contractor was:

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The school is outstandingly effective. Students gain very high examination results. Overall, their achievement is excellent. Teaching and learning are both very good, supported by strong leadership. Value for money is excellent.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Sustained very high achievement and results, in a broad range of subjects
- Partnership of teachers with students who together foster very effective learning
- Friendly and supportive atmosphere in which students of all backgrounds are valued and supported
- Contribution made by students to their academic and personal development through their very good attitudes, behaviour and participation in the life of the school
- Highly effective leadership that cultivates the ethos of success
- Accommodation is a major constraint, curtailing provision in many subjects
- The guidance students receive on their progress is too variable
- The rapid growth and popularity of the sixth form in September 2003 caused difficulties for management, some of which were not satisfactorily handled

**The school has progressed well since the last inspection.** The school has reached and maintains an exceedingly strong position at the top of national league tables of results. Teaching is better now, more imaginative and responsive to different learning styles. All key issues of the last report have been tackled, except that of accommodation, much of which is unsuitable or inadequate.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A*	A*	A*	A*
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	A*	A*	A*	

*Key: A\* - in the top 5% of all schools nationally; A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average.*

*For Year 11, similar schools are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

**Students' overall results are outstandingly good at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE, and represent excellent achievement across Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11, respectively.**

Results have improved over the last few years and in 2002 and 2003 they were at the top of the national league tables for all maintained schools. GCSE results are very high compared with the average for grammar (selective) schools nationally. In English, mathematics and science Year 9 and GCSE results are very high. The achievement of students is excellent at both stages in mathematics and science and at GCSE in English. Students also achieve excellently in French, German, information and communication technology (ICT), art and design and music and very well in nearly all other subjects. Achievement in religious education is very good for those studying the subject but for most in Years 10 and 11 achievement is unsatisfactory because it is only provided as a GCSE option. Achievement in physical education is satisfactory and in citizenship it is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. **All groups of students, including those of minority ethnic background attain very highly. High ability students are supported to do their very best. Achievement in sixth form subjects is excellent: results are very high.** Most students come from favoured circumstances, very supportive homes and have very high prior attainment. They reflect a wide range of communities and ethnic backgrounds across north-west London.

**Students' attitudes are excellent. Behaviour in the main school is very good and in the sixth form, excellent.** Students are very enthusiastic: they immerse themselves in learning and the life of the school. The atmosphere is very harmonious. **Attendance and punctuality are very good.** In the main school students' personal development is very good. Sixth formers have many opportunities to take responsibility and contribute strongly to the extra-curricular programme: their personal development is excellent. The **spiritual development of all, while good, is not as strong as their moral, social and cultural development, which is excellent**, because they do not have the opportunity to attend a daily act of collective worship.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

**The quality of education provided is very good because teaching is very good.** Intellectually demanding, rigorously planned and imaginative teaching enables students to make rapid gains in knowledge and skills. Students have very good learning habits and handle knowledge extremely well. **Learning is characterised by the partnership between teachers and students, who bring to this very high expectations of themselves and a drive for success.** Students concentrate and practise hard to improve. Few exceptions were noted to this. Only in physical education were lapses in concentration observed. Examples were seen, as in English, of very good use of assessment to help students to improve, but generally not enough opportunities are taken to inform students of their progress relative to levels of achievement.

**The curriculum is very good;** it captures the interest of students and helps them to achieve excellently. Requirements are met, except for the provision of religious education for all students from Year 10 upwards. A strong range of extra-curricular activities is provided. Marked deficiencies in accommodation limit opportunities in many subjects and impose pressures on the management of the curriculum, also inhibiting access for the disabled. **Care, guidance and support are good** in the main school. The pastoral arrangements are good, supported by excellent relationships. Advice on academic development is good, but general guidance is variable in quality, depending on the form tutor. **Partnership with parents is good.** Links with local communities and organisations are very good. Students benefit from work experience, community service and many links through subjects with organisations and universities.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**Overall leadership and management are very good.** The school is very well governed overall. However, **governors fail to ensure that the school provides a daily act of worship and religious education for all.** Governors work in close partnership with the headteacher, generating an ethos of success, which is shared across the whole school community. **Very effective leadership by the headteacher and key staff** and commitment to shared values, have steered developments and helped to improve the school. **Management is good in the main school**, but some arrangements for Year 12 at the start of this year were not well managed.

## PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have high expectations and are well satisfied on the whole. They would like more information on the curriculum and progress of their daughters. A recent concern has been the management of sixth form arrangements. Most students are very happy at the school and also self-sufficient. They are aware of difficulties the accommodation presents and some are concerned about this. Sixth formers appreciate the many opportunities they have to lead and take responsibility. Some Year 12 students express concerns that mirror those of parents. Year 13 students are very enthusiastic about all the sixth form provides.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Inform younger students of their progress in subjects more systematically, including what they need to know, understand and do in order to improve
- Provide more consistent guidance for all students on their overall development
- Increase the frequency of review of the progress of sixth form students
- Strengthen overall planning and co-ordination of the sixth form
- Continue to strive vigorously for much needed improvement in accommodation

and, to meet statutory requirements: provide religious education for all students from Year 10 onwards, and a daily act of collective worship.



## SIXTH FORM

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is very highly effective. **Results are excellent and reflect excellent or very good achievement in subjects. Nearly all students go on to university. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection; results have improved. The school is strengthening long-term planning for the sixth form, which has not been as well developed as for the main school. The sixth form is outstandingly cost-effective.**

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Achievement is exceptionally good across a very broad range of subjects
- Independent learning is strongly developed, fostered by very good teaching
- Students make an exceptional contribution to the range of opportunities provided for others and their own social, moral and cultural development
- Long-term planning is not as well developed as for the main school
- Routine arrangements at the start of this year suffered because of pressure of numbers
- Monitoring of students' progress is relatively infrequent and lacks focus

### QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form are shown below. They 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	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	<b>Excellent in English and French.</b> Students achieve very highly because teaching and learning are very good.
Mathematics	<b>Excellent in mathematics:</b> teaching is good and students achieve very highly.
Science	<b>Excellent in biology and chemistry.</b> Science subjects are very popular and students achieve very highly because teaching and learning are very good.
Information and communication technology	<b>Very good in ICT:</b> students make very good progress in response to very good teaching and the facilities available through shared provision with a nearby school.
Humanities	<b>Very good:</b> students achieve very well in <b>Latin, classical civilisation, geography and history.</b> Teaching and learning are very good across the humanities subjects.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	<b>Very good in design and technology:</b> students benefit from very good teaching and make extensive use of ICT.
Visual and performing arts and media	<b>Excellent in art and design and music,</b> in response to excellent teaching. Students augment their learning through participation in extra-curricular activities.
Business	<b>Very good in economics.</b> Teaching and learning are very well managed.
General education	<b>Good:</b> the <b>University Awards Programme in Year 12</b> and <b>general studies in Year 13</b> broaden students' learning and provide good guidance for higher education applications.

*The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements 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'.*

## **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

**Satisfactory:** students are well supported by subject teachers and the school's arrangements for university entrance. Pastoral guidance is satisfactory. Overall review of students' progress is relatively infrequent and targets for improvement lack sharp focus on raising standards. Adjustments in tutorial arrangements at the beginning of this school year have been confusing for some students. Through the many opportunities they have to take responsibility students' personal development is strongly supported. The head girl and her team (the sixth form's elected representatives) make a significant contribution to the life of the school.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM**

**Satisfactory:** departments manage sixth form work as an extension of the rest of their provision and arrangements generally work very well. However, routine arrangements took time to settle because of a big increase in numbers in September 2003. Planning for improvement of the sixth form is incorporated into plans for the whole school and in subject plans. Little separate long-term planning is in place for the sixth form. Overall, governance is effective.

## **STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

Year 13 students praise the school highly. Year 12 students have more mixed views because of changes at the start of this year, but all appreciate and enjoy the very good climate for learning they find in subject provision.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

#### Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards and achievement are very high overall, both in Years 7 to 9 and in General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations, in which all gain five subjects at the higher grades (A\*-C), 84 per cent of the grades achieved being the very highest (A\*, A).

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are very high compared with all schools nationally and with grammar schools
- Students of all backgrounds achieve outstandingly well in examinations
- Progress in lessons is very good
- Literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are very good
- Achievement in religious education is unsatisfactory for most students in Years 10 and 11

#### Commentary

##### **Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2003**

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	43.8 (46.1)	33.3 (33.3)
mathematics	49.3 (49.2)	35.3 (34.7)
science	44.3 (44.8)	33.7 (33.3)

*There were 93 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

##### **Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003**

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	100 (100)	53 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	100 (100)	89 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (100)	95 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	58.9 (58.9)	34.7 (34.6)

*There were 92 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

1. Students achieve very high results in national tests in English, mathematics and science at the end of Year 9. In 2003, average scores in English and science in this high-attaining school were constrained because nationally levels above 7 were not used. However, even when this is taken into account, the results represent high added value from students' standards on entry, which were very high. Results in Year 9 have been improving in line with those nationally and have reached a plateau. Teacher assessments in other subjects are well above average and very high in ICT.
2. GCSE results are exceptionally good. GCSE performance is very much better than in other schools where students have achieved similar results at the end of Year 9. Relative to other grammar (selective) schools nationally, results are very high and represent well above average achievement across Years 10 and 11. Students enter ten or more subjects and a high proportion (in 2003, 80 per cent) gain the highest grades (A\*, A), relatively few grades are below B and virtually all students pass all subjects they take. Results in 2003 were very high in

English, mathematics and science and in most other subjects. In recent years, results have been consistently outstanding in modern foreign languages (French and German), classical civilisation, Latin and in ICT (which students have taken until recently in Year 9). Students' results in art and in design and technology are not quite as good as in their other subjects, but are still well above average. GCSE results have improved broadly in line with those nationally. Very high targets are set, and exceeded. Students of all minority ethnic groups achieve very highly - in 2002 the highest results were obtained by students of Indian and Chinese backgrounds. Bilingual students and those with special educational needs achieve in line with the rest. The results do full justice to high ability students.

- Overall standards in lessons are well above average and stronger in Years 10 and 11 than lower down the school. Generally in lessons students make rapid progress in knowledge, understanding and skills: their achievement is very good because they are very well taught, highly motivated and use their own considerable intellectual ability to good effect. They use their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills very effectively to assist their progress in all subjects. In terms of achievement, no difference was observed between groups of students of different backgrounds or abilities, including those with special educational needs, those who are bilingual or of minority ethnic background. Examples were observed of exceptionally able students achieving outstandingly well - as in music, art, design and technology, ICT, mathematics and science. Variation from this exceptionally good picture occurs in two subjects only. In physical education overall standards and achievement are average, although occasionally individuals and teams perform very well; standards are better in dance. The achievement of most students is unsatisfactory in religious education in Years 10 and 11, because it is only provided for those choosing it for GCSE.

### **Sixth form**

Students achieve excellently and obtain very high results in their A-level subjects. Standards in lessons are high.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Results in A-level subjects are exceptionally high
- A-level results are better than at the last inspection and reflect very high added-value from GCSE
- Students use key skills very effectively to assist their progress in all subjects
- Nearly all students go on to university
- Most students do not have the opportunity to take religious education; it is provided only for the small numbers taking A-level in the subject

### **Commentary**

#### ***Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2003***

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	99 (100)	(N/A)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	90 (87)	(N/A)
Average point score per student	378.8 (371.9)	(263.3)

*There were 108 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

- Sixth form results in Advanced-level (A-level) examinations of the General Certificate of Education (GCE) are very high relative to all schools nationally. Results for particular subjects are mostly exceptionally high - as in English literature, biology and chemistry. Results in economics, mathematics and physics were well above average in 2002 and improved in 2003.

In the last two years almost 90 per cent of the grades awarded have been of the highest grades (A, B) with about 60 per cent of the results being graded A. About 10 per cent of results are below grade B and occasionally students do not achieve a pass grade. Students usually take three or four subjects at A2-level. While many gained very high GCSE grades, their achievement in individual subjects can hardly be bettered because their results are at the ceiling of A-level grades. Average subject performance has improved by over half a grade since the last inspection and in both 2002 and 2003 was half way between A and B. Effective use is made of challenging targets to raise results. Once in the sixth form, students stay for the full length of their course and nearly all go on to university.

- Standards in lessons are generally high. Students make very good progress through sixth form topics and draw on their knowledge to very good effect so that discussion, answers in lessons and written work reflect very good achievement. Standards in key skills are high. Examples of exceptionally high standards were seen in art and Latin and most other subjects. While students studying religious education achieved very well, the great majority do not have the opportunity to develop this area of understanding because it is not part of the general sixth form programme. All groups of students, including those new to the school in the sixth form, the few with special educational needs and those of minority ethnic background or who are bilingual, achieve very well in lessons. The exceptionally able students are helped to make the most of themselves, through their own enthusiasm and challenging, confident teaching. The ethos is of very high achievement.

### **Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Students' attendance is well above average with no unauthorised absence and punctuality is very good. Student's attitudes are excellent, and behaviour is very good. Overall students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of students' relationships with one another and adults is excellent
- Students are enthusiastic about what the school offers them and enjoy coming to school
- A wide range of cultural activities is provided, and many students take full advantage of these
- Students are willing to be enterprising and take responsibility
- Students' confidence and self esteem are very high
- The school operates as a well-ordered and harmonious community
- Behaviour is sometimes inappropriate in the canteen and in corridors
- Opportunities for spiritual development through acts of collective worship are too limited

### **Commentary**

- Overall, students' attitudes, values and personal development are excellent, as at the last inspection. Students are interested in what the school has to offer and consequently arrive punctually. They work very enthusiastically, and many have well-developed skills of independent learning. They research using books, CD-ROMs, the Internet, and other sources. Students are very positive about the school, and involve themselves fully in most lessons. They know that they are very well taught and are mature enough to take full advantage of this. Behaviour is generally very good, but the cramped conditions in the canteen and some corridors cause lapses in the otherwise high standards. Students report that they are happy to talk to staff about any instances of bullying. However, all those who talked to the inspection team said that there was so little bullying that there was no real problem. Students were also quite clear that the school is very harmonious and that students of all backgrounds are respected and fully involved in every part of school life.

7. Students in Years 7 to 9 have the opportunity to attend a residential course in the school's Donhead centre. This helps them to develop their ability to relate to others and take on the responsibilities that help a community to work smoothly. They are also very active in charitable work. They choose which charities to support and arrange a variety of fundraising activities. Much of this is done by the students themselves. The school does not fulfil its statutory duty of holding a daily act of collective worship. Regular assemblies are held for various year groups but they often have very little spiritual content. This, together with the small amount of religious education taught in some years, limits the opportunities for students to develop spiritually. However, some subjects such as art and music make excellent contributions to students' spiritual development. All students benefit through the multi-faith celebration in December and recognition of specific festivals through the year.

### **Sixth form**

Students' attitudes and behaviour are excellent. Attendance is above average and punctuality is very good. Overall, students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Relationships and the climate for learning are excellent
  - Independence is cultivated strongly
  - Tutorial arrangements are good but at the start of this year were disjointed.
  - Requirements for collective worship are not met
8. As at the last inspection, sixth formers are highly motivated and participate keenly in all that the school offers. Lessons are always almost full and when not in lessons large numbers choose to study privately in school. The head girl and her team (all are the sixth form students' elected representatives), together with others, take considerable initiative and responsibility in running a wide range of lunchtime activities and clubs, some of which are linked to subjects and others are more general (including religious groups, sports and chess). All students participate in community service and annually a good number takes work experience abroad. Most Year 13 students are enthusiastic about the school. They feel they have gained in terms of maturity through the very broad programme of extra-curricular activities and the school's expectations of them.
9. In lessons the climate for learning is excellent. Students contribute strongly to this through their sharp focus on learning and high expectations of themselves. Relationships among students of all backgrounds are excellent. Among those new to the school last September some have been elected to the head girl's team. The personal development of sixth formers is promoted strongly through the many ways in which they contribute to the life of the school. They are highly conscious of moral issues and strongly altruistic, caring for others and for society. Cultural development is very good, promoted through the subjects they take, speakers visiting the school and visits. They value ethnic diversity. Many have a well-informed stance on national and global issues. Spiritual development, while fostered in some subjects, is good but not as strongly cultivated as other aspects. As at the last inspection, students attend a programme of assemblies but these do not regularly provide worship.

### **Attendance**

#### ***Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)***

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	6.4	School data :	0.2
National data:	7.8	National data:	1.2

*The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

## Exclusions

There have been no exclusions in the last school year

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided is highly effective across Years 7 to 11 because the quality of teaching and the curriculum are both very good and well matched to students' abilities.

## Teaching and learning

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 148 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
19 (13%)	80 (54%)	39 (26%)	10 (7%)	0	0	0

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.*

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good in nearly all subjects
- Teachers and students work in partnership to foster very effective learning
- Students develop very good independent learning skills
- Teachers draw on their very good subject knowledge in interesting ways
- Opportunities are missed for learning in physical education
- Few opportunities are taken to explain to students their progress relative to levels of achievement

## Commentary

10. Learning is very effective, supported by very good teaching in many subjects, including English, science, art, design and technology, geography, history, religious education, ICT, French, German, music, classical civilisation and Latin. In mathematics, teaching and learning are good, frequently very good, in citizenship they are good, and in physical education they are satisfactory. Teaching is notably better than at the last inspection, particularly in the involvement of students in their own learning. Teachers' participation in the teaching and learning group has fostered interest in students' learning styles.
11. Learning is characterised by the partnership between teachers and students, who bring to this very high expectations of themselves and a drive for success. Teachers provide a very good range of challenging tasks, drawing imaginatively on their very competent subject knowledge to involve students in learning. For example, in a very successful English lesson, Year 9 students enjoyed analysing the witch scene in *Macbeth* and their understanding of Macbeth's state of mind was sharpened through opportunities to 'hot seat' the role of his psychologist. Students concentrated throughout, summarised and interpreted their own and others' views very well. Similarly, in French and German work is challenging and by the time the students are in Year 10 they have acquired a wide range of vocabulary through tasks which interest them, for example, writing in French on a day in the life of Michael Jackson, St Nicholas, or David Beckman etc and, in German, explaining their views on school uniform. Work is very well organised to build on students' understanding, as observed in a top set Year 10 mathematics lesson, when students achieved very well in extending their learning about the sine rule, drawing on work they had done in Year 9. High ability students excel in applying their knowledge and skills to imaginative and challenging tasks, as observed in science lessons, including a revision lesson in electricity and magnetism for Year 11.

12. Students develop very good study skills. They make very effective use of their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills to help them learn and organise their work. They are highly motivated and almost invariably concentrate hard. In order to improve they are prepared to give freely of time outside of lessons. High proportions of students, for example, learn musical instruments and join extra-curricular music activities, students spend time of their own in the art rooms to improve their work. Homework, which is carefully planned to extend learning, is almost invariably completed well. During the inspection rehearsals took place for the drama festival, with short plays produced entirely by small groups of students in Years 7, 8, 10 and 11; performances represented excellent learning and achievement. Concentration flags, however, in some lessons in physical education so that students, in spite of working hard and showing enthusiasm, miss opportunities for improving their skills.
13. Teachers have very confident and competent understanding of their subjects. Planning is rigorous. In lessons, teachers respond excellently to comments and discussion, developing students' subject knowledge, their ability to evaluate critically, and moving them on in their learning. For example, in geography students in Year 10 made very good progress in understanding the importance of location of settlement through the teacher's very effective handling of class debate. Similarly, in religious education, students developed very good understanding of moral issues as a result of teachers' organisation of subject matter and shaping of class and small group discussion. Through such opportunities students' understanding deepens of relevant concepts.
14. Assessment arrangements, while generally effective, are variable across the school. Students' special educational needs are known to teachers, who provide appropriate support. The school monitors carefully students' attainment on entry and their progress across the school. However, few examples were seen in lessons of standards being compared to those nationally - except in English. In other subjects students know how they are performing through helpful comments in class, marking and year assessments expressed in terms of target levels or grades (T-, T, T+). Students say they know how well they are doing and teachers helpfully intervene when they need additional help. However, very few teachers use descriptive statements matched to levels of achievement and this opportunity is missed to inform students systematically about how to improve. While students set targets to help themselves improve, many of these are very general (about study skills).

### **Example of outstanding practice**

**Partnership in learning is an excellent feature of the school. Students and teachers work together with an outstanding sense of purpose and harmony to raise standards.**

As a Year 13 student said "The teachers always respect your views...therefore you are always confident in putting forward ideas", and this approach is evident throughout the school. Students are encouraged to develop confidence in their own ideas. Talent is fostered. A very able student when in Year 8 wrote a melody for piano. Following comment from the teacher that she could hear an orchestra playing it the student scored the piece by hand, fully and for individual parts. This year the training orchestra is rehearsing the piece and benefits from advice from the composer (now in Year 9).

Underpinning the partnership in learning is commitment by all to the values of the school, which include striving for excellence, fostering a lifelong joy of learning and an open mind. Planning for lessons is rigorous and includes a good variety of well-structured activities. Learning is effectively extended by homework. Students are encouraged to evaluate their work and that of others.

### **The curriculum**

The curriculum provided is very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum captures the interest of students and helps them to achieve excellently



- A strong range of academic GCSE subjects is provided
- Extra-curricular activities are richly varied
- Personal, social and health education is good
- Religious education is not provided for all in Years 10 and 11
- The accommodation is poor because it seriously limits provision

### **Commentary**

15. The curriculum has significantly improved since the last inspection. It is now coherent and improved in several respects: in timetabling, number of hours provided, provision for personal, social and health education and for ICT. The curriculum successfully promotes students' very high achievement in English, mathematics, science and most other subjects by the end of Year 9. The range of GCSE subjects offered is good, and enables students to achieve outstanding results. All students study double science and successfully take GCSE ICT in Year 10. French and German are provided and many students enjoy studying both, and they can also study Latin or classical civilisation. In some years Greek is offered. However, statutory requirements are not met in religious education, which is not provided for all students in Years 10 and 11. While significant numbers of students choose to join lunchtime clubs with a religious affiliation, they generally do not continue to learn about and from a range of world religions.
16. Learning and students' personal development are promoted strongly through a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities. The school is alive with activities including drama, concerts, orchestral performances and visiting guests for a range of interests. A good range of sports clubs runs at lunchtimes. Foreign visits, arranged by teachers in modern foreign languages and classical studies, extend learning effectively. Most subjects arrange visits to venues and organisations locally and in London. A recent highlight has been an exhibition of students' artwork at Archway. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons cover required topics, including health and sex education and drugs awareness. Citizenship has been introduced well and is planned to take account of learning in PSHE and other subjects. Careers education is provided at appropriate stages. All Year 10 students participate in work experience, which they appreciate. Support for students with special educational needs, for example dyslexia, is provided by English and other subject teachers who are aware of the students' needs.
17. As at the last inspection, the accommodation imposes serious constraints on the curriculum and the efficiency of arrangements. The buildings are jointly occupied with the Hampstead Garden Suburb Institute and due to the popularity of both school and institute enormous pressure is placed on space. The school does not have general use of the building after 5 pm, which seriously constrains extra-curricular activities and imposes further pressure on lunchtimes. Local interest in preserving characteristics of the area hinders modification of the accommodation or making it more secure. Furthermore, many parts of the building are not adequately maintained. The generally poor decoration and lack of cheerful displays in classrooms and public areas present an environment that students, while feeling affection for historical features, would like to see improved. The school has ambitious plans to modernise the site and governors are working hard to further them. However, for the foreseeable future accommodation is seriously inadequate for design and technology, science, music and drama. Facilities are unsatisfactory in physical education and restrict progress. The canteen is far too cramped for orderly arrangements. No disabled access is provided.
18. In general, resources are adequate. The number of computers matches the average nationally and virtually all rooms have networked facilities. However, some subjects do not have enough computers. Teachers are highly qualified and well matched to the curriculum, but the high proportion of part-timers causes some difficulties in communication. Support staffing is adequate overall. Most are very capable but some, for example technicians in science, are stretched to capacity with high numbers of students.

## **Sixth form**

### **Teaching and learning**

The quality of the provision in the sixth form is very good. Students learn rapidly because they are highly motivated and teachers draw very effectively on their subject expertise.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers' expectations are very high and they organise work very well
  - Students make very effective use of their learning skills
  - Good reference is made to examination requirements to focus students' learning
19. Teaching is very good in most sixth form subjects and excellent in art, music and French. In mathematics, teaching is good, with very good features. Sixth form teaching is better than at the last inspection.
20. Teachers draw extremely effectively on their subject knowledge. Teaching is accurate and challenging and, on occasion, inspiring, as in art, music and French. Students make rapid gains in knowledge, understanding and skills because teachers break down challenging work into straightforward steps and help them understand what is required at A-level. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subjects and also of examination requirements. In history, for example, students improve their answers because teachers require them to give explanation, not description. Explanations are exceptionally clear in geography. In economics precise emphasis is placed on correct definitions. In government and politics initial awareness of relationships between institutions and freedoms is strongly developed through teachers' careful organisation of work. Planning is very detailed as, for example, in English and mathematics, with careful attention to the pace at which students learn and helpful, accurate explanations.
21. Students are extremely attentive. Most have very good learning skills, which teachers help them to develop and apply effectively. In science subjects (biology, chemistry and physics), for example, students are expected to make use of a wide range of reference material, including websites, and teachers' close attention to detail helps them appreciate its accurate use. Students are expected to show initiative, so experimentation with different media is well developed in art and their design skills are enhanced in design and technology. In ICT and design and technology students learn very well alongside students from another local school.
22. Questioning is used effectively to focus learning and to challenge, as in Latin and classical civilisation. Frequent use is made of examination questions so students know the standard they are working towards. Marking is nearly always helpful and diagnostic. Teachers are extremely responsive to students' needs and go out of their way to assist, if they have queries. Assessment follows the school's annual cycle, with a mid-year assessment before parents' consultation evening and formal reporting annually.

### **The curriculum**

The curriculum provided is very good. The range of courses is very well suited to students' very high abilities and aspirations.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Subject choice is very strong and well balanced
- The curriculum supports students' excellent achievement
- Curricular enrichment is good
- Statutory requirements for religious education are not met

- Accommodation is poor

### **Commentary**

23. The range of GCE AS and A2-level courses is very good: it enables students to achieve excellently and progress onto university. Students have a choice of subjects learned lower down the school, including modern foreign languages, classics and sciences, together with economics, government and politics and psychology. The subjects meet the wishes of students; nearly all stay on from Year 11 and many from outside join them, to take advantage of the courses provided, particularly in science. Effective collaboration with Christ's College, a nearby boys' comprehensive school, strengthens provision in design and technology and ICT. The curriculum is enriched, and students' personal development promoted strongly, through the wide-ranging lunchtime activities, many of which students themselves organise. However, participation in these is not systematically monitored so benefits are not evenly spread. For example, unless students join a club or a team they do not participate in regular sport or physical education. The recently introduced University Award Programme (in Year 12) together with general studies (in Year 13) provide good coverage of personal, social and health education topics, including careers education and guidance on university entrance. As at the last inspection, the sixth form programme does not include religious education for all.
24. The sixth form copes with restricting accommodation, as does the rest of the school. Particular difficulties have been caused this year by the extra sixth form teaching groups in science, resulting in too many lessons being taught outside laboratories. Music accommodation is entirely unsuitable. The increased numbers have also caused pressure on resources, but overall these were adequate at the time of the inspection. Numbers of well qualified teachers and support staff are good and adequate, respectively, as for the main school.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The school provides a satisfactory level of care, welfare, health and safety for its students.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pastoral arrangements are good, supported by excellent relationships
- Advice on academic development is good
- Good procedures are in place to meet requirements for safeguarding students
- General guidance is variable in quality, depending on the form tutor
- Cramped conditions in the canteen lead sometimes to a general lack of order

### **Commentary**

25. The care and protection of students are appropriately prioritised. Staff know students well and are alert to their responsibilities towards students. The personal, social and health education programme (PSHE) raises awareness about issues that could affect students' personal safety or health. Students usually like and trust their teachers and this enables them to ask for help and share concerns. First-aid procedures are effective. Safety in lessons is given suitable priority and the school has well set out procedures for health and safety that meet requirements. Concerns about the buildings, including the canteen, stem from the poor accommodation and inadequate maintenance. Several matters were reported to governors, to be referred to the Health and Safety Executive.
26. Very good induction arrangements ensure a positive start to Year 7. Students mostly receive good advice, support and guidance, particularly for their academic development. However, the quality of guidance differs among tutors. The school makes good use of assessment information to guide students' academic progress. Personal achievements, both academic and non-academic, are recorded by form tutors but non-academic achievements are not

monitored systematically. The school is putting into place a more effective system that will ensure better monitoring of each student's overall development. Students are confident that if they have a problem or worry they can go to their tutors or teachers knowing there is someone they can talk to. An innovative mentoring system involving older students augments support for younger students. In discussion, many students say they are not aware of any aggression or bullying, or cases of racism. The school has good systems in place to register and deal with such incidents. The students think this is a very good school and are proud to be enrolled.

27. The programme for careers or further study guidance is good. It begins in Year 7 and continues through to Year 11 and beyond. Until recently, little emphasis has been placed on careers in Year 9, but this has recently been remedied. Students have good information about subject options and about education and training after Year 11.
28. The student council ensures that views of students from all year groups are explored and the school is responsive to requests. The range of discussion is not always as broad as could be expected. Suggestion boxes have been installed and students feel confident of positive action over any concerns.
29. At the last inspection support, guidance and welfare were judged to be good, whereas now they are satisfactory overall, but comments on accommodation (which was poor) were not included in the section on students' welfare. Since the last inspection the overall pastoral structure has been improved. The school responds appropriately as students' special educational needs reveal themselves; support is adequate.

### **Sixth form**

The advice, guidance and support for sixth-form students are satisfactory overall.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good information is provided on sixth form courses
  - Work experience and university visits help students to assess their intentions
  - Monitoring of students' overall progress is relatively infrequent and lacks focus
  - Rearrangements at the start of this year caused disruption in tutorial provision
30. Students are given good information on sixth-form courses when making choices in Year 11, and all who express a desire to join the sixth form are interviewed. This ensures that the vast majority make appropriate choices, and this is reflected in the relatively low dropout rate. Induction arrangements at the start of Year 12 are good. Students, including those new to the school, say they like this introduction. However, the large increase in sixth form numbers this September resulted in changes in form tutor arrangements after the start of term. Through the school council and head girl's team the school hears students' views and generally makes a good response. However, some Year 12 students are not aware that their voice is heard. Many features of pastoral support are good. A selected group of students are trained as mentors for younger students and are involved in teaching aspects of sex education. Both younger students and sixth formers value this opportunity.
  31. Systematic arrangements are in place for monitoring students' progress. Most subjects keep careful records and end-of-module marks, but an overview is taken only termly, when targets are set for improvement. The targets are generally broad and lack sharp focus on standards. A significant minority of students say they would like more information about their progress.
  32. Students and parents are mostly pleased with the guidance given. A minority of Year 12 students is anxious about guidance on university applications, but the school's arrangements are appropriate in this respect, including advice on available courses. Students benefit from the very good links individual subjects have with universities. Representatives from higher education, industry and the professions visit the school and students have good access to careers information through software programmes and the Internet. Work experience is a

strength with many students working abroad, appreciating other cultures and the world of work at first hand.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

Partnership is good in the main school and very good in the sixth form where links with the community, another school and universities are strong.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school is highly popular and heavily oversubscribed
- Links with parents are good
- The school's residential centre provides much appreciated opportunities for students in Years 7, 8 and 9
- Parents would like more involvement in their daughters' education and more frequent information on their daughters' progress
- Comments, some critical, from parents indicate inconsistencies in management and communication

### **Commentary**

33. The school reaches out to the local communities by advertising widely, including advertisements in the minority ethnic press for applications for places. Response is heavy due to the school's successful reputation. The school maintains a good partnership with parents and the community which enhances the standards achieved by the students.
34. Parents are happy with the quality of pastoral care and support. They have very favourable views about student relationships and the general atmosphere in the school. They are keen to assist, but comment on a lack of encouragement by the school for them to become involved in their daughters' education. For example, at their meeting with inspectors they said they would like more information about the curriculum and more frequent reports on their daughters' progress. Both are provided annually, in line with arrangements in most other schools. Students like the school and many say they feel proud to come. While their views are overwhelmingly positive, they also feel concerned about lack of facilities in some areas of the curriculum, such as physical education, sports and music. Both parents and students have concerns, shared by the inspection team, about poor accommodation, including the state of repairs and decoration, and safety. A few parents commented on lack of response to letters. Overall, inspectors share parents' positive views and concluded that the more critical views reflected inconsistencies in management and communication.
35. Links with other schools are satisfactory. Students come from more than 60 primary schools and this makes close liaison impracticable. However, induction for students into Year 7 is very good, with parents' meetings early in the term and with each new student supported by another from Year 8. The school has links with other secondary schools for sport and music.
36. Links with local communities and organisations are very good, overall. In most subjects these close links enrich the curriculum and help to raise achievement. For example, in music there are links with symphony orchestras, and participation in mathematics challenges has brought success. Parental and community contacts provide many places for the good work experience scheme in Year 10. Most students take placements closely related to their career aspirations. The school shares its accommodation with the Hampstead Garden Suburb Institute. Pressure on space is considerable because of the popularity of both school and institute courses. The school makes available its space for the institute in the evenings and at weekends. In this way it is contributing significantly to the community. The students' curriculum is enriched by very good use of the school's residential centre, attended for a week in each year by students when they are in Years 7, 8 and 9. Students particularly enjoy the opportunities to try new activities in a rural environment.

## **Sixth form**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Community service and work experience arrangements are very good
- Links with a nearby comprehensive school are very effective and enhance the curriculum
- Parents have expressed concern about arrangements on entry to the sixth form
- Parents would like more frequent information on their daughters' progress

### **Commentary**

37. Community service and work experience arrangements assist students' personal and career development. Many placements are obtained by the families of students and through local community contacts. Liaison with a local comprehensive school improves opportunities for sixth form ICT and design and technology. In the past other subjects, for example psychology, have benefited from this link. As reported in the section on advice and guidance, links with universities are very good. Sixth formers benefit through visits, open days and exchange of information.
38. Links with parents are similar to those in the main school. At their meeting with inspectors, however, parents expressed concern about arrangements at the start of the sixth form this year, these are shared by some Year 12 students and reported on in following sections. Parents also say they would like more frequent information on their daughters' progress and with so many students new to the school in Year 12, this is reasonable. Students generally appreciate much of what the school offers. They are very pleased with their courses and the induction arrangements to help those new to the school in Year 12. They also appreciate the many opportunities the school provides for them to work independently and say that they are respected and treated as adults. They say teachers are accessible and help them if they have difficulties with their work, which they agree is usually challenging. However, Year 12 students are less confident about the quality of advice and guidance, including the assessment of their work. They feel the school does not provide a good range of worthwhile activities and enrichment outside their main subjects. Inspectors conclude that the concerns expressed stem partly from changes in form tutor for one group at the start of this year and also the fairly early stage of the year in which the inspection was carried out. The programme of enrichment overall is much better than in most schools. Year 13 students, with very few exceptions, say they have greatly enjoyed the sixth form and would recommend it to others.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are very good. Leadership by the headteacher and key staff is very good. Management is good. Governance is highly effective in most respects.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school is very well governed overall
- Governors are working hard to improve accommodation because of its serious inadequacies
- Leadership by the headteacher is very effective in raising standards
- Management, while good overall, is inconsistent in several areas
- Governors do not ensure the school provides a daily act of collective worship, and religious education for all students in Years 10 and 11

### **Commentary**

39. The governors draw on their specialist knowledge and professional backgrounds to the benefit of the school. Overall direction and strategy are shaped in discussion with the headteacher and through debate at the annual 'vision' day. Several work particularly hard and are frequently

in school. The school's senior management team is supported and challenged through the effective committee structure, but the network of links to departments is not yet operating. Governors have a strong sense of developing an equitable and inclusive school and assess very astutely its strengths and weaknesses. Through policies and monitoring, they seek to promote access to the school by students from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. However, governors fail in two respects: the school does not provide a daily act of worship and religious education is not provided for all from Year 10 onwards. Much of governors' energies, with that of the headteacher, are being focused on accommodation issues - notably shared accommodation with Hampstead Garden Suburb Institute, acute shortage of space and poor facilities. While governors are striving to improve the school's poor accommodation they are also very mindful of the context in which the school operates: a handsome building (Grade II\* listed), which is shared with a well-respected institute.

40. The quality of leadership of the headteacher is very good. She has a clear vision for the school and its learning ethos. Values are shared across the whole school community. Management strategies introduced have heightened awareness of the need for added value in examinations - and results have improved. The teaching and learning working party, with good involvement across the school, has been instrumental in strengthening classroom practice. Teaching and learning are noticeably better now than at the last inspection. Members of the senior team work closely with the headteacher in supporting and monitoring the work of the school, which provides an excellent climate for learning.
41. Leadership is strong in most subject departments. Managers are confident and share a sense of purpose with their teams and effectively maintain very high standards. Most departments monitor performance systematically. Nevertheless, inconsistencies occur, for example, in the assessment of students' work and the quality of guidance provided by form tutors. The school has a strong commitment to staff development, although opportunities have been reduced because of budget cuts. All teachers have been provided with a laptop, to promote the use of ICT across the school. Teachers are hardworking. Communication is sometimes difficult because of two buildings and a significant number of part-time staff, some with major responsibilities.
42. Co-ordination of literacy and numeracy across the school, now embedded in most schools, has been overlooked or taken for granted. Responsibility for students who speak English as an additional language and for special educational needs is taken by an assistant headteacher, but no other co-ordinators are identified. These areas are not greatly significant in this school because of the general very high ability levels, but closer attention to them could benefit some students and accelerate their progress.
43. The school copes with a huge burden in administering about 1,100 applications for entry into Year 7 (where there are 93 places). Similar but smaller pressures occur with applications for the sixth form. In the face of this mountain of paperwork it is perhaps not surprising that some paperwork goes astray. However, it is unfortunate and a few parents at their meeting commented on this.
44. Leadership remains very effective, as at the last inspection. Management has improved, overall. Then, gaps were evident in the management structure, which have been resolved.

### **Sixth form**

Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory. Governance is effective overall. As in the main school, collective worship and religious education are not provided for all.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Subject leadership and management are very good
- Some arrangements for Year 12 at the start of this year were not well managed

- No separate consideration has been given to the long-term development of the sixth form
- Commentary**
45. Departments manage sixth form work as an extension of the rest of their provision; arrangements generally work very well. Unexpectedly high numbers of students joining Year 12 in September 2003 caused difficulties for management and some were not satisfactorily handled, so that changes were made in some form tutors and teaching groups, even several weeks after the start of term. Plans for improvement of the sixth form are incorporated into those of the whole school and in subject plans. The school is strengthening long-term planning for the sixth form and introducing a separate section in its school development plan.
  46. Sixth form results and the curriculum are reviewed through departments and by the senior team. Students run many extra-curricular activities and although a senior manager has oversight of these, monitoring is inconsistent, dependent on the tutor.
  47. Leadership and management of the sixth form are satisfactory. Reasonable improvement has been made since the last inspection; responsibilities are now better defined. Then, as now, the head girl's team was a model of delegation, working closely with staff.

## Financial information

### *Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003*

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,640,179	Balance from previous year	273,754
Total expenditure	2,592,537	Balance carried forward to the next	321,396
Expenditure per student	3757		

48. Finances for the whole school are monitored by governors and efficiently managed. Governors, in spite of drawing heavily on resources, have reluctantly cut staffing numbers in order to meet the requirement to balance the school's budget. The amount of money spent per student is above average and to a large extent this is due to the presence of the sixth form, which is relatively large. Maintenance of the accommodation is expensive and in the last year redecoration has been carried out in some areas. Principles of best value are understood and applied.



# PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

## SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

#### English

Provision in English is **excellent**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very high standards of written and spoken English by Years 9 and 11.
- Results in the GCSE examinations, in both English and English literature, are very high when compared with those in similar schools.
- Lessons are very well planned to encourage the active participation of students in their learning.
- Teachers use time in lessons very effectively and make very good use of the students' enthusiasm for learning.

#### Commentary

49. Students, while overall high attaining on entry, come from a wide range of backgrounds and with a wide range of linguistic strengths. By the end of Year 9 they achieve well above average in national tests when compared with the average for students who also achieved very highly at the start of Year 7. In the first three years students develop language skills well within a wide programme of speaking, writing and shared and individual reading, which includes plays by Shakespeare. They achieve very successfully because they are well motivated and are taught very effectively by well-qualified specialist teachers. Standards are very high in GCSE examinations. All students gained A\*- B grades in 2002 and 2003, with more than nine out of ten achieving A\* or A grades in English, and almost eight out of ten doing so in English literature. These levels are very high both when compared with all schools nationally and also with selective schools. Achievement is excellent.
50. In lessons, standards are high by Year 9, in part because students have developed very good analytical skills and proficiently examine the language, structure and meaning of texts. Speaking, listening, reading and writing are all well above average for this stage. Standards continue to improve rapidly through the school. The quality of group discussion as Year 11 students worked collaboratively to examine how Miller creates the atmosphere of seventeenth-century Salem in *The Crucible* was of a very high standard. Speakers were very articulate and confident, revealing a thorough understanding of the play and its historical context, as well as an appreciation of the tensions between the principal characters. Students of all ethnic backgrounds progress very well in lessons.
51. The quality of teaching is very good, with some excellent features. Teaching draws on the enthusiasm and strong motivation of the students to provide effective development of language skills and an appreciation of all forms of literature and drama. Lessons are well organised and include a very good range of imaginative, challenging activities, to use time to maximum effect. A strong feature of the English department is its collaborative professional approach to continuing curriculum development.
52. Very good leadership and management in the last two years have taken the department forward in improving assessment techniques, introducing self-assessment for students, and helping newer teachers to make a full contribution to the department. Schemes of work have been improved in recent months to include new elements which draw on the National Literacy Strategy and consider the needs of bilingual students and those with special educational

needs. Teaching is stronger overall than it was at the time of the last inspection with teachers now planning to involve students actively in all lessons as participants in their own learning.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

53. Standards of literacy are high. Students communicate very effectively in writing. They present their work neatly and use their writing as an aid to study, by underlining or annotating specific parts in many subjects. They write in an appropriate range of styles including description, explanation and the preparation of reports. While a few spelling and punctuation inaccuracies occur in the writing of younger students, these are seldom evident in the writing of those who are older. Students are very well read on the whole, and supplement books with material available on the Internet. In texts, they readily explore meaning. Sources of information are critically analysed by older students, for example in history. Students are generally very articulate, except in French and German, where some lack confidence in speaking the foreign language. More usually, they contribute strongly to class discussion and older students very readily state their views and debate. Listening skills are very good. Students concentrate hard in lessons, responding very effectively to cues and to each other, as in drama activities and music.

### **Modern foreign languages**

French and German have a prominent role in the curriculum. All students begin each language in Year 7 in mixed ability form groups and continue to Year 9. All students choose one language for Years 10 and 11, and some decide to continue with two languages. The number of such students is broadly in line with the national average for selective schools. Year 10 shows more students choosing two languages than last year, and more students study French than German.

The head of department of modern foreign languages provides very good leadership and educational direction and manages the department very effectively. A team of committed linguists supports her. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good, particularly with the introduction of ICT. GCSE results show that students achieve better in French and German than in most of their other subjects.

In this department of four, teaching approaches are shared across both languages. The quality of teaching in each language is very good overall and an example of excellent teaching was seen in Year 11 French. Students want to learn, are keen to work hard, and are involved in and enjoy working, both independently and collaboratively. With the judicious use of worksheets, teachers methodically build up students' knowledge of vocabulary and of grammar. Excellent use is made of homework to extend lesson work. Teachers use the foreign languages consistently in the classroom to challenge students. They plan their lessons well to stimulate students' interest with different activities and skills. A good programme of visits and exchanges benefits students' confidence in foreign languages and enhances their personal development. The increased use of ICT has added a new dimension to learning, which students enjoy. Students are prepared most effectively for examinations.

Provision in both French and German is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses:**

- GCSE results in French and German are outstanding
- Stimulating and challenging teaching, allied to students' excellent attitudes, promotes very high standards
- Leadership and management of the department are very effective
- Teachers contribute very well to students' moral, social and cultural development
- Excellent use is made of homework by all teachers to extend the work of the classroom
- Students are not always confident speakers in French or German, and their pronunciation is not secure

## Commentary

### French

54. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above average. GCSE results in 2003 were outstanding: the vast majority of students attained the highest grades, A\* and A. They were even better than the very high results of the previous year. Achievement was excellent. Results are much better than the average for selective schools. In work seen during the inspection at an early stage in the academic year, students' overall level of attainment in Years 7 to 9 was above average, and in Years 10 and 11 was well above average. Students of all backgrounds are achieving very well, and have the capacity to improve further. Their listening skills are very good. They understand the foreign language used in lessons, but not all students speak with confidence, and pronunciation varies in quality. Intonation when questioning could be improved. Their written work is a strength and is of a very high standard. Students read widely, including topical materials. Over time, students acquire a very wide range of relevant vocabulary, grammatical constructions and tenses. When mistakes occur they tend to be of a careless nature, for example, the omission of accents. Students in Year 9 have studied the past tense, and they can write short post-cards and use the immediate future. In Year 11, students write accurate letters of complaint to hotels or to newspapers.

### German

55. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 indicate that overall standards are well above average. GCSE results are outstanding: in 2003, nearly all students attained the higher grades, A\* and A. This was an improvement on the very high results of 2002 and represented excellent achievement. In work seen during the inspection, students' overall level of attainment in Years 7 to 9 was above average, and in Years 10 and 11 it was well above average. Students of all backgrounds are achieving very well, and have the capacity to improve further. Their understanding of the foreign language used in the classroom is generally very good. They encounter a good range of challenging texts. In their written work, students in Year 9 use the perfect tense correctly and they are developing their knowledge of word order, particularly after *weil*. Students in Year 11 have acquired a wide range of vocabulary and of verbs of different tenses to write about work experience. However, students are not always confident speakers. Students in two classes in Year 9 needed prompts for their presentations. Their pronunciation was not always secure, and the responses of some Year 11 students to the language assistant were limited.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **excellent**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very highly at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations
- Teaching and learning are good with some very good features; all work hard and have respect for each other
- The department is well managed; teachers support one another and teamwork is strong
- Little use is made of short-term targets to help students assess their progress

## Commentary

56. Results at the end of Year 9 have been consistently very high when compared with all schools nationally and with schools with students of similar attainment at the start of Year 7. In 2003, results were better than in 2002 with all students gaining Level 7 or better. In 2002, GCSE results were very high when compared both with all schools nationally and also with those of

selective schools. Results in 2003 were even better with all students gaining grade B or above. Achievement is very high; time is allocated to revise the work prior to examinations and results reflect the benefit of this.

57. Standards in Years 7 to 9 seen during the inspection were well above average. Students enter the school with well above average attainment and progress well. By Year 9 their numerical skills, both mentally and in writing, are strong. Algebraic skills are well developed and students are able to determine linear and quadratic progressions. They can handle quadratic graphs confidently, but are less skilled in the sketching of the graphs. When analysing data students competently use formulae to find averages; they construct and use tree diagrams to determine probabilities of events. Overall, achievement across Years 7 to 9 is very good.
58. All students in Years 10 and 11 prepare for the GCSE higher-level tier examination and by the end of Year 11 they attain very highly. Students seen demonstrated a high level of understanding of trigonometry and applied Pythagoras Rule and trigonometric ratios in solving problems involving right-angled triangles. Both knowledge and skills are extended to apply more complex rules of trigonometry in all triangles. Calculators are used most competently. Students from lower sets follow the same work and although, initially, they demonstrate some hesitancy in the application of formulae, with practice and targeted support from teachers they quickly improve. Examination coursework assignments are of very high quality; the exceptionally high standard of presentation, including the use of diagrams, is helped by using computers. However, in mathematics lessons there are too few opportunities for students to use ICT; there are no computers for students' use in the department.
59. Teaching and learning are good and frequently very good. However, sometimes in Year 7 teaching and learning are just satisfactory because teachers do not always take enough account of students' prior learning. For example, the more able students find some work too easy, such as decimals and percentages. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. This enables them to pose questions to encourage students to participate confidently, and also to give clear explanations to help students understand. Lesson planning is well structured. Students of all backgrounds progress well in lessons. They are keen learners and show interest in all tasks. Behaviour is exemplary. Relationships are excellent; students work well both collaboratively and independently. Students' progress is monitored through regular tests the results of which are used to plan future work. However, students would benefit from the setting of short-term targets to help them assess their own progress.
60. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. A common purpose unites teachers of the subject and systematic review of performance is undertaken. Ideas are discussed and good practice shared at regular formal and informal meetings. Students have opportunities to take part in National Mathematics Challenges and many gain high awards. Three students have been selected to attend a master class in the spring term. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, overall. Higher standards have been reached in tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations. Lack of funding has thwarted the intention to supply the department with computers. More recently, reduction in staff has resulted in larger group sizes and a reduction in time allocated to teaching mathematics; this imposes constraints on the delivery of the curriculum, for example in reducing opportunities for following investigative approaches.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

61. Standards are high, overall. In mathematics students demonstrate very good number skills, both mentally and in writing. Calculators are used very competently for a variety of purposes including trigonometry. However, there is no consistent approach to numeracy across the department and no monitored policy applied across subjects in the school.
62. Although a number of subjects use numeracy well, most do not plan for promoting numeracy skills. In geography, scales and graphs, including block and line graphs, are used well. Older

students are able to calculate percentages of population growth and velocity of streams. From lines of best fit they determine positive or negative correlation. Standards are above average. Very good use is made of charts and graphs in both design and technology and ICT. Ideas of scale, enlargement and spatial relationships are explored and successfully applied in design and technology: standards are high. Students manipulate formulae ably in science and use graphs very effectively. In history, graphs are used to good effect to interpret data. Students demonstrate high level skills in decoding and the calculation of number in music.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **excellent**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very highly: GCSE results are very high
- Teachers use their subject expertise very effectively to provide well planned lessons which involve students in their own learning
- Students are highly motivated and very able
- Opportunities for practical work are limited by shortage of laboratories, and need review
- Comments on marking do not always provide clear guidance on how to improve
- A full Key Stage 3 audit has not been carried out

### Commentary

63. The attainment of students at the end of Year 9 is very high compared to that in all schools nationally and to schools with a similar intake. Results in national tests have risen in line with the national trend, but have always been very much higher. Achievement is excellent. GCSE results in 2002 were also very high, both when compared with all schools nationally and also with selective schools. Results in 2003 were closely similar. By far the largest proportion of students - and many more than found nationally - gain grade A\* or A and nearly all the rest gain grade B. In recent years all students have gained grade C or better. Overall, students' attainment in science matches that of other subjects in the school. Achievement across Years 10 and 11 is excellent, among all groups of students.
64. Overall teaching is very good. It is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good across Years 10 and 11. All teachers have very good subject knowledge, plan lessons well and use a range of effective teaching strategies to involve students in their own learning. ICT is used to good effect. Teaching at GCSE level has appropriate challenge and makes learning an enjoyable, co-operative experience. Questioning is used very well so that the most able are stretched, as observed in a Year 11 revision lessons on electricity and magnetism. Students made very good use of group work and so all consolidated their learning very effectively. Where teaching showed room for improvement, there was need to choose better examples as a basis for learning and in a number of instances there was need to consider appropriate choice of material to allow maximum use of data collected. Some introductory investigative work in Year 7 used students' own physical performance, and while the activity was good fun, planning for fair testing was very difficult. All students make good progress in lessons but some find it difficult to organise their work, and pick up ideas more slowly; they would benefit from more appropriate resource or support materials, and clearer guidance on how to improve. Overall, students' skills in literacy and numeracy are well developed and support their work effectively. The department has limited computer resources but these are used to good effect. Students in all years apply ICT skills effectively, using them for text, imaging, data display, group presentations and leaflet production.
65. Students' attitudes are excellent. They are keen, enjoy their work, take pride in its presentation and apply themselves well. They show initiative and students of all backgrounds work well together. The atmosphere is very harmonious and productive. The outstanding level of joint

effort by teachers and students enables teaching to be very effective, resulting in the very high standards seen.

66. Leadership and management in science are very good. Teaching is monitored and professional development given high priority. Health and safety issues have been carefully targeted. Participation in a local authority working party has contributed effectively to the development of new Key Stage 3 schemes but there has been no overall Key Stage 3 audit. Due to the significant number of part-time teachers, meetings of all science teachers are rare, raising problems of communication. This has been overcome to some extent by the use of weekly bulletins and notes in addition to meetings. Subject leaders carry out their roles effectively and the department works well as a team - including the hard working laboratory technicians who provide first-rate support. Since the last inspection progress has been very good. Very high standards have been maintained and teaching and learning are better.
67. Many lessons are taught outside laboratories, which constrains practical work and impacts on teaching and learning opportunities, reducing flexibility. It requires the production of room rotas, which places an additional workload on the head of department and teachers. This shortage of accommodation is by far the most significant negative factor affecting the provision in science, which in almost every other aspect is excellent or very good. Provision of equipment is only just satisfactory to meet needs. Text book resources are adequate but some need updating.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Achievement is excellent throughout: students are working up to their individual capabilities and continually increasing their potential
- Standards overall are well above average
- Teaching and learning are generally very good, with some examples of excellence
- Students' attitudes and independent learning are excellent
- The subject is very well led and managed
- The quality of cross-curricular ICT is variable; the use of ICT in some subjects is underdeveloped

### **Commentary**

68. Standards overall in ICT are very high by the end of Year 9. In the past the GCSE examination was taken in Year 9. This has now been changed and students will take the examination in Year 10. GCSE results have been well above the average for all schools, and much above the national average for selective schools. Results were amongst the best in the school in 2002, and in 2003 a good majority of students gained the very highest (A\*) grades.
69. Year 7 students show high standards of critical awareness when evaluating one another's *PowerPoint* presentations. They have excellent knowledge of the software for their age and presentations are well designed, colour co-ordinated, and show a good sense of corporate image. When working with a database Year 9 students quickly learn how to design and make both simple and complex queries. Year 10 students show very good general knowledge of the law when discussing copyright and other types of computer legislation. Their comments are extremely well phrased and they give perceptive and well-informed answers to challenging questions.
70. Independent learning is extended by the use of home computers and very good use is made of the Internet for research in all subjects. Teaching and learning are mostly very good and never less than good, and there is some excellent teaching. Teachers present the subject with great

enthusiasm. Aims and objectives of lessons are carefully explained with good use of overhead computer projectors, and questioning is used very effectively throughout lessons to set a brisk pace for learning. Assignments are taught in an interesting way through varied teaching strategies and not all through practical computer work. The GCSE course is well planned and delivered; teachers have very good knowledge of the examination requirements and assessment criteria. Excellent knowledge of a comprehensive range of software enables advanced work and evaluation, promoting very high standards of learning and achievement among students of all backgrounds.

71. The subject is very effectively led and managed. The ICT lessons for all students up to Year 10 are beginning to contribute towards improving standards in other curricular areas. Improvement since the last inspection is very good with outstanding examination results being maintained, and a further upward trend this year. National Curriculum requirements are now being met in both key stages. However, there are subjects where the use of ICT is underdeveloped, (see the paragraph which follows). Although there are many extra-curricular opportunities, still more resources and some upgrading is needed to meet requirements for access for all subjects, as room availability is often a problem. Development plans address resource issues, but there is no working group, with representatives from all subject areas, to aid co-ordination of ICT across the curriculum.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

72. The ICT department's policy is to give all students the opportunity to develop their ICT skills through all subjects of the curriculum, and to ensure that all students, including sixth form students, have as wide a range of ICT experience as possible. This is happening in most, but not all, subject areas. The quality of cross-curricular ICT is very variable. The use of ICT is strongest in art, geography and design and technology. Effective use is made of digital cameras in art, and of computer-aided design in all years in design and technology. The use of ICT is satisfactory in mathematics and good in science, modern foreign languages, Latin and classical civilisation. Several subjects lack appropriate resources, including English, mathematics, religious education, music and physical education. Not enough use of ICT is made in history. However, separate ICT lessons for all students in Years 7 to 10 ensure that they gain ICT skills, and are able to apply them widely. Overall, students' competence is well above average for their ages. They use ICT, including the Internet, effectively in most subjects, and the extensive use of home computers contributes significantly to their capabilities.

## **HUMANITIES**

Provision in classical studies (Latin and classical civilisation), geography and history was inspected.

### **Classical studies**

Latin is provided from Year 8 and is a GCSE option choice. Classical civilisation is provided from Year 10 as a GCSE subject. In some years Greek is taught outside lesson time, and the Greek GCSE results in 2003 were very high.

The head of department manages both subjects, Latin and classical civilisation, very well. The same team of teachers teaches Latin and classical civilisation. Teaching was good or better in all of the lessons seen and, overall, the teaching is very good. Teachers have an excellent grasp of the subject and an obvious enthusiasm that stimulates students. Written work is set regularly and marked in a detailed way that clearly shows students how they can improve. Students are very responsive in lessons and enjoy the work set for them. They work in a purposeful manner and are remarkably independent, needing little or no encouragement to get down to work. Teaching reflects the aims of the school, and contributes effectively to the social, moral and cultural development of students. Resources and accommodation are satisfactory.

Provision in both Latin and classical civilisation is **very good**.

## Latin

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very high standards
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge
- The high level of challenge in lessons stretches all students
- Good use is made of ICT
- Not enough opportunities are provided for students to read Latin aloud

### Commentary

73. Students attain high standards in Latin in Year 9 and by Year 11 their standards are very high. Students of all ethnic backgrounds attain equally well. About two-fifths of students choose to study Latin for GCSE. Results for the last two years have been very high, maintaining the very good standards seen in the last inspection. Results are well above the average for selective schools. Students achieve very well throughout.
74. Younger students quickly assimilate the grammar and learn to translate fluently in response to well planned and stimulating teaching. By Year 9 standards in lessons are well above average, reflecting teachers' high expectations and students' rapid progress. The teaching for GCSE moves students on to an appreciation of the literary values of Roman authors. This was seen in a very good Year 11 lesson on the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, where the students identified literary features such as *hendiadys* (linking synonyms as a pair, as in law and order). Others commented on how the author used short phrases to create a picture of Pygmalion's haste to adorn the statue that he had created.
75. Students' excellent attitudes help them do well. They participate enthusiastically in class and small group activities. Discussion is used very productively. However, nearly all activities involving Latin are paper based - either writing or reading. Few activities are provided for speaking and listening. The strong place that this subject holds in the school contributes very well to the breadth and balance of the curriculum.

## Classical civilisation

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are excellent: students achieve highly
- Moral and social awareness are cultivated strongly
- A good range of interesting topics is provided
- Well-planned teaching encourages students to adopt an analytical approach
- Sometimes large groups are slow to arrive and settle

### Commentary

76. Just over half of the students choose classical civilisation as a GCSE option. Results are very high relative to all schools nationally and have risen steadily since the last inspection. Results are above the average for selective schools. In lessons students of all backgrounds achieve very well: standards are well above average. Students begin to use technical terms such as *chthonic* confidently and realise the importance of giving references to support their assertions. In an imaginative Year 10 lesson, students used finger puppets and other visual aids to illustrate the voyage of Odysseus. Some groups are rather large and teachers need to guard against time being lost while the group settles. Students are encouraged to discuss moral and social issues in the texts. Year 11 students made very thoughtful comments about the way that the Greeks and Romans viewed their gods, and contrasted it with current belief systems.



## Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve excellent standards in lessons and in examinations
- The quality of teaching is very good with some excellent features
- Relationships between students and staff are excellent
- Fieldwork opportunities are very good
- Provision of computer facilities in the department is limited
- Identification in lesson plans of opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is underdeveloped

### Commentary

77. Teacher assessment of students' attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2002 was well above the national average. High standards have been maintained consistently over a number of years. The quality of work seen during the inspection was outstanding in terms of content and presentation. Tourism leaflets produced by students in Years 8 and 9 are up to marketable standards and in some cases of excellent quality. Year 7 students not only calculate distances between places using a linear scale, but also by using accurately the representative fraction on Ordnance Survey maps. By the end of Year 9 the standard of students' work is well above national expectations. GCSE results are well above the national average and a little above the average for selective schools. The proportion achieving the highest grades is very high. The standard of work seen in students' independent case studies reveals a very good understanding of concepts as well as skills of investigation. The use of mathematics and presentation of work are of a very high standard. The achievement of students of all backgrounds is very good.
78. The quality of teaching is very good with some excellent features. Lessons are exceptionally well planned. Resources are appropriate and skilfully used to stimulate interest. The students respond with enquiring minds and a strong desire to pursue ideas. The work is always challenging with very good encouragement and support for every student. A noticeable feature of all lessons is the focus on learning objectives throughout the lesson to ensure they are being achieved. High expectations and a sensitive awareness of the needs of the students ensure that they acquire new skills and achieve highly. Opportunities are overlooked for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development because, although they are implicit by the very nature of the topics, they are not identified in the planning of lessons. The very good relationships between staff and students engender a climate in which learning becomes a pleasure.
79. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department has a very clear vision for the subject and very good plans for development. In a relatively short space of time, the profile of the subject has been raised significantly so that recruitment for GCSE has trebled in the last three years. Relationships in the department are excellent and teamwork with colleagues is of a very high standard. Budgetary constraints have dictated the lack of computers, which are needed in classrooms. Storage space and accommodation for staff are limited. The range and quality of fieldwork experience are outstanding. Throughout their time in school the students benefit from studies at a field centre in Dorset, coastal studies at Chesil Beach and Walton on the Naze, river studies in Epping Forest and mountain landscapes in Snowdonia.
80. Good improvements have been made since the last inspection. Schemes of work have been updated and the syllabus changed to an issues-based approach that better reflects the needs and interests of the students. New texts and other resources have been acquired to match the

schemes of work, citizenship planning incorporated in lessons and links established with students in Iceland.

## History

Provision in history is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well throughout the school because of very good teaching and learning
- Standards are well above the national average at the end of Year 9 and GCSE results are very high
- Relationships are a strong feature enabling students to have very positive attitudes to learning
- Very good leadership and management have been effective in improving teaching and learning and raising achievement
- Assessment systems are not rigorous enough to monitor students' progress and achievement thoroughly, particularly in Years 7 to 9

### Commentary

81. GCSE results are very high and a little above the average for selective schools. Most students achieve the highest grades (A\*, A), which is a significant improvement since the last inspection. By Year 9, students achieve high standards and these are sustained throughout the school as achievement remains well above average. In work seen and lessons observed, it is very evident that students demonstrate a very good sense of chronology. They compare past with the present very well, using historical skills of enquiry and interpretation. They are developing high levels of skill in researching and recording, working effectively as independent learners. In Years 10 and 11, students both build strongly on their previous knowledge and understanding and also cover the examination syllabus content thoroughly. They use language accurately most of the time and interpret and evaluate how historians reach different conclusions. They question historical sources effectively to extract and use information to identify reasons and explain events very well. Students of all backgrounds achieve very well.
82. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Teachers have a very good command of their subject and they use a variety of very effective teaching styles, which enable students to acquire new historical knowledge and deepen their understanding. Their consistently detailed planning is closely linked to the scheme of work. They teach historical terminology and skills systematically and cover examination requirements very well. They provide very effective challenge, coupled with high expectations both of behaviour and standards of work. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace with valuable links made with literacy, numeracy and citizenship. Teachers mark students work regularly. Plans are in place to improve assessment arrangements, especially in non-examination years where assessment is not always linked to the National Curriculum criteria. Nevertheless, students demonstrate very good attitudes to learning; they collaborate well and contribute actively to their own learning, and their progress is very good as a result.
83. Leadership and management are very good. The subject leader is enthusiastic, has a clear vision about what needs doing and how to go about it. Teamwork is very good, with very good relationships providing very good role models for students. The teachers cope with the limited accommodation and make effective use of ICT. Policy and other documents are of high quality and self-evaluation is used well to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The main weaknesses of the last inspection have been well addressed. The quality of teaching and learning and results have been improved.

### Religious education

Provision in religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve very well in Years 7 to 9
- GCSE results for the small number entered are very high
- Most teaching is very good
- Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are cultivated well
- Statutory requirements are not met in Years 10 to 11
- Time allocated to the teaching of religious education is below the requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus
- The school does not take full advantage of its multi-religious community to raise standards

## **Commentary**

84. Standards in Year 9 are well above the expectations of the Locally Agreed Syllabus. The standards in the GCSE religious studies course are also very high and compare well with other subjects, but the subject is taken by only a small group of students in Year 11. At present, students take examinations in alternate years. In 2002 results were well above the average for selective schools. Students of all backgrounds who study religious education achieve very well and gain a very good understanding of the beliefs, practices and insights of religions. They become confident and present their views very well, based on their understanding of their own and others' faiths. Students on the GCSE course know and understand very well the influence of religion on people and society.
85. The quality of teaching is very good overall. Teachers have a good command of the subject and plan their lessons well. Relationships are very good. Some very good features of teaching and learning include independent and collaborative learning, enthusiasm and effective involvement of students, who produce work of high quality showing a good development of skills. Very good opportunities are provided for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, enabling them to make use of their own backgrounds and respect one another's feelings and beliefs. For example, in a lesson on religion and poverty, students took on the roles of religious leaders and their followers. They researched the issues of world poverty. Later, they discussed at a special 'conference' how poverty can be alleviated by following the teachings of their respective religions - Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and Christianity - and they were very convincing in their arguments. Factual accuracy is mostly consistently achieved by students but the guidance they receive through marking and assessments does not link well enough with the attainment levels in the Agreed Syllabus.
86. The requirements of the Locally Agreed Syllabus for Key Stage 4 are not met. Little more than half the recommended time for teaching religious education is provided in Years 7 to 9. Students have limited opportunities to visit places of religious interest, or establish links with the community, especially those who have other than Christian or Jewish backgrounds. However, clubs run by sixth formers for all students include the Christian Union, and Jewish and Islamic Societies.
87. Leadership and management of teaching and the curriculum are very good but for the subject as a whole are just satisfactory because although courses are very effective, the school has not provided for all students to receive their entitlement provision. The specialist room includes sensitive displays of students' work and pictures about people and different religions. This creates a pleasant learning environment for students. Resources for the subject, such as textbooks, worksheets, posters, artefacts and pictures, are good for Christianity and Judaism, and adequate for other religions. The issue about non-compliance with statutory requirements raised in the last inspection report remains to be addressed.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

Provision in design and technology is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students' achievement is very good in all years
- At the end of Year 9 standards are well above the national average and GCSE results are high
- Students' attitudes and independent learning are excellent
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall, and some teaching is excellent
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good
- ICT is used effectively to enhance learning and achievement
- The school does not have facilities for food technology or textiles

### **Commentary**

88. Students follow the design process well when designing and making products in a variety of materials. The area of resistant materials is not covered, but a good range of media is used, and the breadth of project work offers many design opportunities. Standards are well above national averages overall. Year 7 students show clear understanding of the use of both *Word* and specialist technical software to design shapes and patterns for a novelty watch and strap. They make their designs appropriate for a specific age group and annotate them showing very good awareness of design requirements. Above-average understanding of design and marketing requirements is demonstrated by Year 10 students, for example, when brainstorming ideas for the production of a pop-up greetings cards. They research extremely well. Their isometric drawings are accurate and communicate design ideas very effectively. Pre-production models of novelty children's storage units by Year 11 show a high standard of skill. Students use hand and power tools effectively, joints are carefully measured, cut and assembled.
89. Finished products in all years represent very good achievement overall, and some is excellent. Students of all backgrounds are working up to the limits of their capabilities. Design sheets in folders show good content with many original ideas, well considered design briefs, specifications and evaluations. GCSE results are well above the national average for all schools, and above the national average for selective schools. However, standards of design could be promoted even more through further reference to specific design movements and the designs of other cultures.
90. Students have excellent attitudes to learning; they enjoy working in the department and tackle the assignments with great enthusiasm. Very good contributions are made to students' personal development through visits, links with local companies for work experience and the many curricular links prompted by the environmental, social and moral considerations of designing and manufacturing products.
91. Teaching ranges from good to excellent, and is very good overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and communicate it well. Lessons are well planned and presented, with clear aims and objectives and regular assessment. Challenging projects are appropriately linked to particular year groups, and many incorporate useful elements of ICT. Excellent demonstrations enable very good learning and progression during practical sessions. Class management is generally very good and a brisk pace is maintained in most lessons, but not all. Very good use is made of high quality computer-aided design software and health and safety factors are well addressed in the limited workshop space.

92. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is a clear vision of how the subject needs to develop. The department is flourishing because of the innovative approach of the two teachers and the excellent role models they provide for students. Good improvements have been made since the last inspection; high standards are being maintained. Development plans are forward looking with a strong emphasis on improving provision for computer-aided design, computer-aided manufacture and raising standards even higher.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

Both art and design and music were inspected. They are provided in Years 7 to 9 and as GCSE option subjects in Years 10 and 11. Dance is provided as part of physical education and is commented on in that report.

Work in drama was sampled. Drama is provided in Year 7 and as a GCSE option subject in Years 10 and 11. During the week of the inspection rehearsals for the drama festival were held. These involved students in Years 7, 8, 10 and 11. Because of the festival, no lessons were seen in Year 7. The achievement of younger students as seen in the drama festival was excellent. In year groups students had worked out the plot, characterisation, staging, and often the script, with minimum help from members of staff.

Results in drama at GCSE are very high, even though students have drama lessons in only one out of three years before they begin the GCSE course. Achievement is very creditable, particularly when account is taken of the unsatisfactory accommodation: there is still no suitable and identified drama space in which to work. Written work seen confirms a thorough and deep understanding of drama texts.

### **Art and design**

Provision in art and design is **very good**, with some **excellent features**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCSE results are very high
- Students' achievement is excellent, supported by their strong motivation
- Teachers know their subject very well and share their enthusiasm with students
- Excellent relationships help to build students' confidence and self-esteem
- Students take increasing responsibility for their own learning
- Accommodation is cramped, limiting large-scale work and display

### **Commentary**

93. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 are very high. In Year 11, a substantial majority of students entered for GCSE gain the highest grades (A\* and A). Results are very high compared with all schools nationally and above the average for selective schools. Results over the last three years have improved and more students are opting to take the subject.
94. Standards seen during the inspection were very high and confirmed the results attained. Students start the school with a wide range of attainment in art and their achievement is excellent as they move up the school. In Year 7, students learn basic skills in colour, tone and composition and they soon apply these skills in imaginative ways and in a variety of media. By Year 9, students reach a very good standard of observational drawing and this provides an excellent foundation for much of their more experimental work. With clear guidance from their teachers, they make regular connections between their own work and that of artists, designers and art movements. Students speak with confidence about characteristics in their work based on artists they have studied. The quality of their research and practical homework indicates excellent motivation. Students are confident users of ICT. They make regular use of the Internet and scan and manipulate digital images with flair.

95. Teaching and learning are always very good and often excellent. Teachers' very good command of the subject enables them to plan work that extends every student, including those who display special talent. Teachers have high expectations and encourage students to use their initiative and be independent. The result is that students learn quickly and find excitement in work which they can tailor to their own individual interests. Relationships are excellent. Students appreciate and respond to the regular critiques they receive in lessons. Students have opportunities, overseen by teachers, to assess informally their own work. However, opportunities are missed to engage them more formally in evaluating and assessing their own work, in recognising progress and raising their standards further. Students show respect for and interest in others' work, in particular that which arises from the many different cultures and ethnic backgrounds of the students, which helps all groups to achieve excellently. Students feel valued as individuals. They reflect on and explore issues of spirituality and this contributes very well to their personal development.
96. Leadership and management are very good. With clear vision, thorough planning and good teamwork, standards have improved since the last inspection. There have been significant improvements in teaching, the use of ICT and assessment. New initiatives have been well managed. Visiting artists and extracurricular life classes enrich provision. With an increasing number of students, however, accommodation is unsatisfactory and this constrains the department's development. Studio space is cramped and limited for any large-scale work, for storage, for display and for exhibiting students' work following their GCSE examinations.

## Music

The quality of provision in music is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students consistently attain very high standards because the quality of teaching is very good, often excellent
- Peripatetic tutors make a significant contribution to the musical life of the school
- Students work very well together
- The quality of leadership is excellent
- The accommodation is inadequate, substandard, and was heavily criticised in the last report

### Commentary

97. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are very high. Results in the GCSE examination were excellent this year, maintaining the upward trend achieved by the department over the last three years. The school appears to be on course to maintain these excellent results with, this year, approximately double the number of students in examination classes.
98. In lessons seen, standards were well above average and in the extra-curricular activities they were often excellent. Students show increasingly good skills of composition. Orchestration is at times outstanding. The students' achievement is excellent because of their determination to learn, improve, and so discover the next challenge. For example, a Year 11 lesson was observed in which students analysed and performed Charpentier's *Prelude to the Te Deum*. They worked extremely well in groups playing passages such as the *rondo*. Their very high level of understanding of musical notation, form and structure, and rigorous teaching with great attention to detail, led to very good progress for students of all backgrounds.
99. Teaching is very good, often excellent. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, and make increasingly effective use of assessment systems, so that everyone knows what they have to do to improve. Even the youngest students work extremely well in small groups, despite the irritations of often not being able to hear each other properly. The peripatetic tutors make a significant contribution to the musical life of the school, through their skill and evident

enthusiasm, despite often damp and cramped accommodation and lack of basics, such as a piano stool for each piano.

100. Leadership of the department is excellent. Schemes of work are now very good, and promote continuity of students' learning, both in lessons and the very wide range of extra-curricular ensembles. There is a contagious commitment to the highest standards and to enjoyment in all aspects of the department's work and students are responding to this very positively. Management of the department and improvement since the last inspection are very good. The very high results have been achieved in accommodation which is neither soundproofed nor big enough. This aspect represents no improvement since the last inspection.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

### Physical education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 9 results in above average standards in dance
- The involvement of older students in coaching of extra-curricular activities contributes to high standards
- Immature attitudes to physical education in Year 11 lead to underachievement by a minority of students
- Younger students' vocabulary is not well developed for effective evaluating and coaching

### Commentary

101. Standards reached by students Year 9 are average. This represents good achievement from students' very mixed levels of attainment on entry in Year 7. The quality of movement in dance in Year 7 is above average. They combine imagination and a rich mix of movements from different cultures to perform evocative dances. Their knowledge of technical vocabulary to describe feelings and mood or to evaluate skills is not so well developed. There is no difference in the rate of learning or achievement between different minority ethnic groups or those with special educational needs. The diversity of culture adds positively to the students' experiences. Standards reached in Year 11 are average; students achieve satisfactorily. They communicate well and are able to organise and coach practices effectively. Their ability to transfer skills they have practised to the full game is not so well developed. A minority of students have above average skills in netball. They apply advanced tactics and have good ball skills. However, a minority of students in Year 11 are underachieving because they are not well motivated enough to practise diligently in order to improve their skills. This slows their rate of progress.
102. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It is best in Years 7 to 9 where the rate of learning is good. Lessons are well planned to ensure the main objectives are met. A high level of independence is extended to students, for example, when they organise their apparatus, practices and their own groups. This mostly leads to good levels of motivation. Tasks are designed to improve evaluative skills but these are not systematically developed to improve performance throughout the lesson. Practices are well designed to make maximum use of very small spaces, but inevitably teams have to watch others perform. This time is not always used to develop coaching skills. Good use is made of digital photography and video to show past performance and gives students new ideas. Extra-curricular activities are popular and students enjoy success at local and county levels. Good use is made of the local community facilities for hockey, tennis, athletics and swimming. The students have a good experience of outdoor adventure activities at the Year 9 school residential visit.
103. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Since the last inspection there has been a reduction in the number of specialist teachers. The curriculum has been developed

innovatively to accommodate this situation and coaches are hired to teach activities such as self-defence, gymnastics and football. Overall, however, improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. Standards are not as high as at the last inspection, when they were above average in Years 10 and 11, although basketball has improved and dance remains above average. The overall quality of teaching is now satisfactory and at the last inspection was good. No opportunities are provided to follow examination courses in this subject. The continuing unsatisfactory quality of accommodation has a negative impact on standards.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught through separately time-tabled lessons and topics covered in early morning form times and assemblies. Lessons, form-times and assemblies were sampled during the inspection. Citizenship has been recently introduced and is systematically planned with account taken of work covered in PSHE lessons and other subjects.

### **Personal, social and health education**

Provision in PSHE is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- PSHE lessons are very effectively taught
- The curriculum covers a suitable range of topics
- Provision in early morning form times is more variable in quality

Students participate fully in activities, which cover required topics such as health, sex and drugs awareness education, as well as other matters about school life, personal development and careers. PSHE lessons are taught by a small team of teachers who follow the school's planned scheme. Teaching and learning in the lessons seen were very good overall. Provision in early morning form time is more variable in quality; many more teachers are involved and during the inspection some sessions were modified because of the drama festival. However, in Year 7 lessons behaviour in relation to others was explored and lessons were very effective, allowing consideration of issues about bullying and its effects.

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve well across Years 7 to 9 and very well in Years 10 and 11
- The introduction of the subject has been well planned
- Some very good teaching acts as a model for future growth
- Planning in most curricular areas identifies opportunities to promote citizenship
- Citizenship logs have only recently been introduced and their use is not yet established
- Younger students are not very aware of the term 'citizenship' although they are clear about many of the areas that the subject covers

### **Commentary**

104. Students reach good standards by Year 9 and very good standards by Year 11. They have clear views as to the value of the subject and participate well in lessons. Students understand the rights and responsibilities of living in a democratic society. This is clear from the way that they put forward opinions about politics and topics such as crime and punishment. Many students are well informed and argue in a reasoned and mature way. Little direct teaching of



the subject was seen during the inspection, but what was seen was good or better, and overall, the teaching is good. A very good lesson in Year 10 on the treatment of offenders led to lively debate, and the students developed and modified their views through listening to each other, as well as the teacher. Students value these opportunities to crystallise their own views in a supportive atmosphere. Students of all backgrounds achieve very well.

105. The subject co-ordinator has been in charge of the subject since the beginning of the academic year. He has drawn up a well-planned course to cover all the requirements of the National Curriculum. Personal, social and health education lessons cover much of the content and other subjects, especially religious education and history, contribute. Plans show provision for citizenship issues in most subjects. Environmental issues were discussed from different perspectives in science and geography lessons. Some very good work on the role of women in society was seen in a classical civilisation lesson. Regular tutor sessions for each class cover appropriate topics. Assemblies also contribute to the teaching of the subject, as visiting speakers are aware of the general focus of the term's work for the various year groups. The school council is effective in involving all students and helping them participate democratically in the life of the school. Little formal assessment is carried out at the moment, and the students are not entirely clear about how the citizenship logs included in their personal planners will work. The resources and accommodation for the subject are satisfactory and enable the subject to be taught effectively.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 14 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 2003 and 2002, the latest year for which national comparisons are available. Figures in brackets are for 2002.

### Level 3 GCE AS-level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art	5	100	(90)	100	(43)	56	(39)
Biology	5 (9)	100 (100)	(82)	60 (89)	(33)	46 (56)	(33)
Chemistry	5	100	(85)	100	(37)	54	(35)
Classical studies	(8)	(88)	(95)	(88)	(50)	(50)	(42)
Economics	5	100	(86)	100	(42)	54	(37)
English literature	11 (12)	100 (100)	(94)	73 (83)	(38)	49 (53)	(39)
French	12 (11)	100 (100)	(85)	67 (100)	(35)	48 (55)	(35)
Further mathematics	3	100	N/A	100	N/A	57	N/A
Geography	2	100	(88)	100	(36)	55	(36)
German	6	100	(88)	83	(35)	57	(37)
Government and politics	1	100	(83)	100	(33)	50	(34)
History	7	100	(92)	86	(37)	53	(38)
Latin	2	100	(89)	50	(54)	45	(42)
Mathematics	11 (16)	91 (81)	(74)	73 (44)	(34)	45 (38)	(31)
Music	6	100	(94)	100	(39)	50	(39)

Physics	3 (13)	100 (100)	(82)	67 (85)	(36)	40 (53)	(34)
Religious studies	5	100	(91)	100	(39)	60	(39)

### **Level 3 GCE A-level courses**

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	8 (6)	100 (100)	(96)	88 (100)	(49)	105 (117)	(85)
Biology	59 (62)	100 (100)	(92)	81 (82)	(36)	106 (104)	(74)
Chemistry	66 (62)	100 (100)	(94)	95 (89)	(46)	112 (109)	(81)
Classical studies	12 (8)	100 (100)	(99)	92 (63)	(52)	108 (98)	(88)
Design and technology	2	100	N/A	100	N/A	110	N/A
Drama	11 (5)	100 (100)	(98)	36 (80)	(42)	82 (104)	(83)
Economics	23 (19)	100 (100)	(96)	87 (62)	(46)	107 (99)	(83)
English literature	35 (31)	(100)	100 (99)	97 (100)	(44)	111 (117)	(84)
French	31 (14)	100 (100)	(96)	84 (93)	(46)	107 (113)	(83)
Further mathematics	1	100	N/A	100	N/A	120	N/A
Geography	7 (20)	100 (100)	(97)	100 (75)	(41)	114 (102)	(81)
German	5	100	N/A	100	N/A	116	N/A
Government and politics	16 (7)	94 (100)	(94)	94 (100)	(39)	113 (111)	(78)
History	22 (11)	100 (100)	(97)	95 (100)	(41)	113 (115)	(81)
Latin	8	100	N/A	100	N/A	120	N/A
Mathematics	45 (40)	98 (93)	(93)	98 (75)	(52)	112 (100)	(85)
Music	1	100	N/A	100	N/A	120	N/A
Physics	18 (18)	100 (94)	(93)	89 (83)	(43)	109(100)	(79)
Psychology	4	100	N/A	100	N/A	105	N/A
Religious studies	6 (7)	100 (100)	(96)	100 (100)	(44)	113 (109)	(82)

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English is provided at AS and A2-levels and was inspected in detail.

### English

Provision in English is **excellent**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' performance in examinations is outstanding
- Lessons are very well-planned by well-qualified teachers: they ensure that students participate actively in lessons and achieve highly
- Students bring considerable enthusiasm and a high level of motivation to their study of literary texts
- The curriculum is enriched greatly by the visits of authors and poets to the school and by visits to theatres

### Commentary

106. English literature is a popular and successful examination course. More students than previously are applying to read the subject at university. This reflects both the excellent achievement in GCSE and A-level examinations and the enjoyment which students gain from the well-taught courses. Results in the A2-level examination have been consistently very high in every year since the last inspection. Almost all students, including those new to the school in the sixth form, have gained passes at the highest grades (A or B) in this period. This success rate is much higher than average for similar (selective) schools. Students completing the AS-level course have achieved grades which are very high compared with all schools nationally.
107. Observations of lessons and students' writing show that the level of work is of the standard expected from students aiming for the highest grades at A2-level. Students studying *Othello*, for example, showed great skill in interpreting the motives of central characters from their recent reading of the first act of the play and in answering questions of other students. Year 12 students showed intelligent perception in close reading of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. A series of demanding and interesting activities planned by teachers guided students towards a detailed examination of the playwright's techniques, and an appraisal of a central character's attitudes and behaviour, and capacity for making relationships. Students at this stage have well developed note-taking skills and are improving their skills in planning and writing literary essays. A minority of students in Year 12 produces a surprising number of spelling and punctuation errors in first drafts of essays.
108. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and prepare lessons carefully to involve students actively in discussion, argument, reading, thinking and writing. Students respond to the challenge well. They enjoy collaborative work in pairs and groups and show enthusiasm in the dramatisation of short scenes to perform to the whole group. Homework and private study tasks are integral parts of the course and are helpful for the completion of assignments and for preliminary reading of the work of new authors and poets.
109. Leadership and management of English in the sixth form are very good. In the last two years there has been a move to a more collegiate style of planning and teaching. The five, well-qualified teachers contributing to the A-level teaching plan together well. They ensure that time is used effectively and that a variety of approaches is used. Examples of completed essays show that assessment procedures are thorough and helpful to the students. The high standards of students' work reported at the last inspection have been maintained and the

overall quality of teaching and learning is better than it was in 1998. Overall improvement is good.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

110. Standards are very good. While subject teachers are very aware of the importance of effective communication, no consistent approach is adopted to the development of key skills across the curriculum, although a key skills English lesson is provided for those who need support. Most students embark on sixth form courses with very high grades in English at GCSE. Nonetheless, some inaccuracies in spelling and punctuation are evident in the work of a small minority of students. On the whole, students' written work is very good, well presented and they use notes taken in class to very good effect, with underlining or other methods to emphasise key points. They organise their work very effectively, marshalling evidence to support their views, as is evident in English, history, geography and religious education. Students listen very attentively and are very confident about speaking in class if they have queries or are presenting information. Most are articulate and the high level of debate in which they can engage reflects their very high abilities and grasp of concepts. Reading is well developed. Students read extensively for their own pleasure and for research, making very good use of textbooks, the library, the Internet and other resources.

### **Modern foreign languages**

The focus was on French, but German was also sampled. In German, examination results in 2003 were very high, as was students' achievement. Two lessons were observed, one in Year 12 and one in Year 13. In both lessons, teaching and students' progress were very good. Year 13 students spoke with good accent and confidently explained complex ideas about the Church and politics in the 1930s.

#### **French**

Provision in French is **excellent**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Examination results and students' achievement are very high
- Excellent teaching engages students' interests
- The study of literature adds an extra dimension and develops students analytical powers
- The teaching contributes substantially to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

#### **Commentary**

111. The examination results and students' achievement in AS and A-level examinations in 2003 and 2002 were very high. All students who started the courses completed them successfully. Standards of attainment in Years 12 and 13 lessons are well above average. Students begin with exceptionally high GCSE grades. Teachers build very successfully on these standards. Oral skills are developed well in discussions, in which students are encouraged to debate different sides of the topic. Teachers' high expectations demand that French be the language of the classroom for teacher and student alike. Their excellent subject knowledge and consistent use of the foreign language in lessons impact significantly on students' listening skills. Students' written work is of a high standard. They write competently about social and literary aspects of topics and are encouraged to read widely, including newspapers and magazines.
112. Achievement is excellent among students of all backgrounds, including those new to the school in the sixth form. Over time, they acquire a very wide range of vocabulary which enables them to tackle widely differing topics, such as the dangers of smoking in Year 12 or the secular nature of French education in Year 13. In a Year 12 lesson, students conducted mock

interviews for television about the role of cancer in cigarette smoking. The study of literature adds an extra dimension, which students enjoy very much and which helps them to develop their powers of analysis. A Year 13 lesson on *Les Justes* was a continual dialogue between students and teacher as they questioned him effectively about the play's moral issues.

113. The quality of teaching is excellent. Teachers' superb background knowledge of the topics, allied to inspiring and innovative teaching methods, engage students' interests. They ensure that the whole class is involved all the time. Worksheets are used very effectively to consolidate knowledge and to test students. Important points of grammar are continually reviewed and consolidated or extended. Students' written work is marked regularly, with helpful comments, and students know what they have to do to improve.
114. Leadership and management of the department are very effective. Teachers know their students well: students new to the school are supported well. Students are encouraged to use ICT for presentations and for research. In discussion, students spoke of the good working relationship between teachers and students. They value the study of literature and spoke highly of last year's production of *Les Justes*. Five of this year's students intend to continue French at university and it seems likely that progression through to university among current Year 12 students will be high. Results now are a little better than at the time of the last inspection.

## **MATHEMATICS**

The inspection covered A2 and AS-level courses in mathematics with mechanics and statistics.

Provision in mathematics is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students attain very highly in examinations
- Teaching and learning are good with some very good features
- Relationships are excellent; teachers and students treat one another with respect
- Students would benefit from more opportunities to discuss mathematical ideas in class

### **Commentary**

115. Results of AS and A2-level examinations have consistently been well above national averages. In 2002, three-quarters of the A2-level students achieved grade B or better. Results in 2003 were even better than this: all but one of the 45 candidates achieved grade B or above. This represents high achievement from their very high standards at GCSE. AS-level results, although not quite as impressive as those at A2-level, are very good. A small number of students follows the further mathematics syllabus; in 2003 all gained grade B or better. These results are a credit to the students, as the course is not timetabled. Teachers offer lunchtime sessions and these are supplemented by students working in their own time. Mathematics is a popular subject but due to staffing difficulties two groups, one from Year 12 and the other from Year 13, are shared between two teachers. The sharing of the work is well managed.
116. Standards of work seen in lessons and in students' exercise books are very good in all aspects of the subject. For example, students have good knowledge of algebraic principles and skills are applied confidently when using formulae to find variance and standard deviation. Standards are equally good in mechanics; students employ methods of differentiation and integration in a variety of contexts. Mental number skills are strong. Students of all backgrounds achieve highly.
117. Students show in-depth knowledge as well as enjoyment when given opportunities to discuss mathematical and scientific phenomena, for example ideas relating to situations involving moving and colliding particles and they would benefit from more opportunities for the

discussion of mathematical ideas to accelerate their learning. Although students are competent users of calculators they are less skilled in finding solutions when using more complex formulae. Some hesitancy is evident when being introduced to new ideas; however, with teacher support and practice of solving problems they soon improve their competence and understanding.

118. Teaching and learning are good and often very good. Teachers have very good knowledge of their subject and this enables them to plan lessons carefully and to explain the work clearly. Both teachers and students work hard. Teachers give of their time freely to support students who demonstrate a high level of commitment and determination to gain the best outcomes. Relationships are excellent.
119. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. Teachers are united in a common aim to ensure all students achieve their best. Teamwork is very good; teachers meet regularly to discuss the work of the department and when planning work for the shared groups in the sixth form. Very good results have been maintained since the last inspection, with 2003 results being better than in most years. Overall, improvement has been good.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

120. The application of number is not consistently developed across the curriculum; no links have been developed between subjects and the mathematics department. However, most students start the sixth form with very good grades in GCSE mathematics.
121. Overall standards are very good. In mathematics, students' standards of numeracy are very good. Students are confident and most proficient in mental calculations; calculators are well used and students improve their competence in manipulating complex formulae. In geography, standards are high; statistics are analysed using standard tests of statistical significance and correlations between data are determined. Students in music are proficient in manipulating number in relation to harmony and melody. In economics, students demonstrate very good skills in the accurate drawing of graphs, as well as in handling number operations and algebraic expressions and equations. In science subjects, students make effective use of graphs, formulae and equations.

## **SCIENCE**

Advanced level biology, chemistry and physics are provided. Science subjects are popular in the sixth form, particularly biology and chemistry for which significant numbers stay on from Year 11 and they are joined by students from other schools. The focus of this inspection was on biology and chemistry. Physics was also sampled. Physics teaching seen during the inspection was excellent, with good student participation and sense of wonder when observing French chalk in a laser beam. Recent results in AS-level examinations in physics have been very high and A2-level results have been well above the national average in all schools.

### **Biology**

Provision in biology is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Overall achievement is excellent: results are very high
- Teaching is very good
- Students are very able, enjoy the subject and benefit from a wide range of opportunities for independent learning
- No enough support is provided for students who find it hard to organise their work
- Little regular feedback is given to students on how to improve their work

- Not enough technician and ICT support are provided
- Accommodation is inadequate for the number of classes: the problem is urgent for current groups and more laboratories are needed

### Commentary

122. Students' results both at AS and A2-levels are very high. All students perform better than predicted on the basis of their GCSE results and value-added in the subject is very high.
123. Standards in lessons and work seen were equally high, among students of all backgrounds. Students in Year 13 had benefited greatly from recent field work. They described ecological sampling techniques, hypotheses and methods adopted for their individual studies on the field trip. They readily identify seashore organisms. In new work on homeostasis they could explain the role of insulin in the regulation of glucose levels. Folders are well organised and show meticulous care in their production and logical progression to high A2-level work. Coursework on the activity of cellulase was of a very high standard showing well-developed skills. Materials were excellently presented making good use of digital photographs integrated in the text. Students in Year 12 showed good understanding of tests for biochemicals and above average understanding of the chemical structure of carbohydrates and lipids. Most folders were well organised and of a good standard but a few were not well structured. Essays about cell organelles were well written. Weaker students showed need for greater attention in the construction and content of folders.
124. Overall, teaching is very good. Teachers have very good command of their subject. Teaching progresses logically through units and a wide range of teaching strategies is used. Students make significant contributions to lessons. ICT is routinely used, the Internet is searched and software used to model experiments and to test learning. Teachers and students communicate by e-mail. Teachers' lesson notes are on the school network, which students can access when in school or at home. The annual field trip is a valuable and enjoyable part of the curriculum. Teachers make very good use of past examination papers and tests to challenge students and help them do their best. Marks are recorded and corrections discussed. However, students received little regular written feedback indicating how to improve their work. Messages from assessment have little impact on teaching approaches and content, but teachers give willingly of their own time to help students understand. Students are given a wide range of opportunities for independent learning. They carry out individual research projects and present their findings with the aid of computer software. They regularly discuss ideas in small groups and report their findings to the class.
125. Students' attitudes reflect a consistent pursuit of excellence. They participate well, work with a will, show great enjoyment in what they do and are mutually supportive. They present high quality work. Encouraged by teachers, they are successful in external competitions and have been awarded national bursaries. Achievement in lessons is extended through work experience. For example, some have worked in medical research establishments producing work of high quality. Students organise a well-supported scientific society inviting guest speakers. Many have chosen to study biology because they had enjoyed it in Year 11 and know it is useful for careers in medicine or biological sciences. They appreciate greatly the help given by teachers but voice concern about inadequate laboratory accommodation and resources.
126. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. Since the last inspection, high standards have been maintained. The use of ICT for teaching has improved. As much use is made of modern technology as possible, within the constraints of laboratory space and available resources. However, increased student numbers exceed the capacity of laboratories and cause difficulties in teaching and learning. Technical support is working to capacity. The teaching, although very successful, is nevertheless constrained by lack of laboratory space.

## Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **excellent**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in examinations are very high
- Teaching and learning are very good
- Students are keen to do very well and most have excellent study skills
- Accommodation is sub-standard and inadequate for the number of classes

### Commentary

127. Overall results in AS and A2-level examinations are excellent. Results at A2-level have steadily improved over the last five years. Out of the large numbers of students who chose to take A-level chemistry, a good majority achieves the highest grade (A) and only a very few obtain a grade lower than B; all pass: overall achievement is excellent. Students of all backgrounds do similarly well.
128. Standards in lessons are well above average and students make very good gains in their knowledge, understanding and skills. Their written work is very clearly organised. Year 12 has progressed very well to achieve very secure understanding of ionisation energies since the beginning of term. Teachers' constant emphasis on clarity and accuracy are helping to raise standards further. Year 13 students use their understanding of atomic structure and bonding very effectively to explain the structure and configuration of esters. The very good progress they have made in understanding the effects of variables on chemical equilibria rests on their excellent grasp of chemical concepts and proficiency in mathematics. Practical skills are very good: students work deftly, accurately and are respectful of health and safety. In lessons frequent reference is made to examination requirements. Preparation for examinations is very thorough and helps students to do their best.
129. Students' very good learning results from very effective teaching. While teachers among the small team of chemists contribute individual strengths, all have very good command of their subject, are thorough and assist students in organising their work. At best, teachers work in partnership with students, helping their learning. Students have very high expectations. They keep neat records of their work with good emphasis on key facts and concepts, debate and present their work well in discussion, develop precise understanding of what is required in examinations, and apply their mathematical and ICT skills very effectively. They think about their learning as the lesson progresses, probe anything they do not understand and extend their learning using homework and ICT. Students' progress is tracked effectively. Lessons frequently include practical work, although this has to be planned carefully because the number of groups exceeds the availability of laboratories; no spontaneous practical illustration is possible in classrooms. Teachers give freely of their time to help students, for example in the lunchtime.
130. Chemistry is led and managed very ably within the science team. Teachers' enthusiasm is reflected in students' attitudes - they say they like chemistry because it is interesting and fun. While little detail was provided on chemistry in the last report, results have improved steadily since then. Pressure on laboratories, though, has increased and limits the efficiency with which chemistry can be taught. Technician support is adequate.



## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are well above the national average at AS-level
- Teaching is very good with some excellent features
- Students make very good progress in acquiring new knowledge and skills
- A2 and key skills ICT courses are very well managed

### **Commentary**

131. The AS-level results in 2003 were the results for the first group to take the course and were well above recent national averages, although the group was small. Four of the six students gained A grades, in line with their performance in other subjects. Students of all backgrounds achieved well from their very high standards at GCSE.
132. Although there are currently no Year 12 students taking AS-level, 50 have opted to follow the key skills course at Level 3. In a lesson seen, students showed a high level of proficiency in spreadsheets, extending their already competent skills in manipulating formulae gained for GCSE. The few students new to the school received excellent support through additional materials to ensure they had the necessary knowledge for the scheduled external examination. Students had not yet begun to prepare coursework portfolios, missing an opportunity to make an early start on this.
133. Standards in lessons and work seen of the current Year 13 working towards A2-level examinations were above course expectations, although written project work, still in preparation, was only just satisfactory. Students join classes in a neighbouring boys' school in an excellent ICT room. Teaching and learning were very good in the two lessons seen. The teacher's excellent subject knowledge helped students to consolidate their learning of difficult concepts. Individual and paired work were well combined, although no oral presentations were seen. Students of all ethnic groups worked very well together. Project marking was detailed, constructive and regular. Students are well aware of further tasks required for course requirements. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The subject was not reported on during the last inspection, so improvement since that time cannot be evaluated. However, provision in the sixth form has been successfully launched and provides a good basis for further development.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

134. Students who have progressed into the sixth form from lower down the school generally have high grade GCSE passes in ICT and good competence in a range of applications which they use effectively, often to extend work done in lessons, for example by researching using the Internet and to present coursework. A research report produced using desktop publishing by a science student after a work placement in a medical charity was outstanding. Several very good examples of graphs were seen in various subjects including geography, art and mathematics. Students who would like support in Year 12 join key skills classes to update their skills. ICT is used well in science and geography lessons and very effectively in design and technology and art.

## **HUMANITIES**

135. Advanced-level classical studies (Latin and classical civilisation), geography, history, religious education, government and politics and psychology are provided. The focus of the inspection was on classical studies, geography and history. Work in religious education, government and politics and psychology was sampled.

136. Recent results at AS and A2-level in religious studies have been excellent. In a Year 13 lesson sampled teaching and learning were very good. Students achieved very well in understanding the ideas of philosophers, such as William James and Rudolph Otto, about religious experience.
137. Government and politics results at AS and A2-level have been very high in recent years. In lessons sampled teaching and learning were very good. Students achieve very high standards because of their deep interest in national and international issues. Political argument and explanations are very well developed.
138. Psychology has only recently been introduced. The first A2-level results in 2003 were very good. In the two lessons sampled standards were well above average. Teaching was very good. Expectations of students and their independent research were high.

### **Classical Studies**

The provision in both Latin and classical civilisation is **very good**.

139. The head of department manages the subjects - Latin and classical civilisation - very well. She has created an effective team and her own high quality teaching provides a very good role model. Students are supported well, and their individual needs taken into account. The subjects attract a worthwhile number of AS and A2-level students each year and there are plans to offer Greek to AS-level from September 2004. Extra-curricular visits are arranged, including trips abroad (this year's trip was to Greece) as well as to local places of interest. These both raise awareness of the subject and enrich the curriculum. The library holds a good stock of high quality textbooks, for students who wish to do research at the highest level.
140. The head of department and one other teacher teach all the classical studies lessons. The head of music also teaches two Latin lessons weekly. Teachers have very high expectations of all students. They use questions very effectively so that there is always an element of challenge in lessons. This helps to ensure that students are working at full stretch. All teachers in the department taught at least one excellent lesson during the inspection. The students respond very positively to this high level of expertise. Relationships in the groups are excellent, and there is mutual respect among teachers and students.

### **Latin**

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are excellent
- Students enjoy the subject and benefit from external visits
- Teachers have very high expectations so that students work at full stretch
- Strengthen opportunities for students to develop their feel for the sound of Latin by reading aloud.

#### **Commentary**

141. In recent years, the standards attained at A2-level have been outstanding and well above those found nationally in selective schools. Last year all but one student gained an A grade. The AS-level results last year were also extremely high, with all students scoring A grades. While results for small groups of students must be treated with caution, the overall trend is one of well-maintained very high standards. In the current Year 13, standards in Latin are excellent. Students of all backgrounds achieve very well.
142. Sixth form students have a very mature appreciation of the value of learning Latin. Some appreciate how it enhances their understanding of other languages. The science specialists

enjoy the analytical approach, while those intending to study classics at university find the range of language, literature and culture that the subject contains very satisfying. All the A2-level students express very positive attitudes towards it. In an excellent lesson on the poetical works of Lucretius the teacher stimulated a lively debate about the belief of some ancient philosophers that the atom is the smallest unit of matter. This particularly engrossed the students who study science as well as Latin and the quality of the discussion was very high indeed. However, students would benefit from more opportunities to read Latin – especially verse - aloud as this would sharpen their appreciation of the sound and rhythm of the language.

## **Classical civilisation**

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve very well and develop good analytical skills
  - The subject contributes significantly to students' understanding of spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues
  - Teaching is of very good quality
  - In wide ability classes, a few students need extra support to complete the tasks set within the time allowed
143. This course has been available only since 2001. The results have improved each year and last year the standards attained at A2-level were very high and above those seen in similar (selective) schools. In the current Year 13, standards in the subject are well above average and students of all backgrounds achieve very well.
144. Students study a wide range of topics and many develop an ability to compare different cultures in a confident way. In an essay on the iconography of Greek vases, one student compared the techniques of vase painters with the work of Lucien Freud. Students are also encouraged to see how Roman poets, such as Vergil, refer to the Odyssey and Greek tragedies in their work. Consequently, students become more aware of the way that allusion and resonance heighten the effectiveness of literary works. The ability range of students in Year 12 is wide but some make astute comments on literature they study. Others find it hard to sequence events, although the gap in attainment is being narrowed by very effective teaching. This approach to topics studies contributes significantly to the cultural development of students and also deepens students' understanding of moral and spiritual issues. In a lesson in Year 13 on Greek epic poetry, students discussed the role of women in ancient society. Many students made mature and thoughtful comments and some went on to contrast it with the role of women nowadays. Discussion about the relationship between gods and mortals in the ancient world was also very good.

## **Geography**

Provision in geography is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Achievement is very good: results are very high
- The quality of teaching is very good with excellent features
- Relationships between staff and students are outstanding
- Fieldwork opportunities are very good
- Computer facilities in the department are limited

## Commentary

145. In the 2002 A2-level examinations the proportion of students achieving A and B grades was well above the national average for all schools and the percentage of A grades was high. This represents very good achievement and is reflected in the standard of work seen during the inspection. The quality of work in lessons and in notebooks is often equivalent to first year university standard. The students show good understanding of geographical concepts and apply statistical techniques effectively to show correlations between factors influencing landscape formation. The standard of independent work in response to homework is high and the students make effective use of current affairs reports to supplement their studies.
146. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The very good subject knowledge of the teachers is used very effectively, both to answer searching questions and also to raise the level of curiosity of the students. The students have full confidence in their teachers and commented 'teachers are very knowledgeable about every aspect of the subject'. Independent learning is fostered by providing opportunities for the students to record their own responses to the resources provided. They show great skill in selecting relevant material from video clips and the up-to-date articles that the teachers provide. The quality of discussion and debate is excellent as, for example, in a Year 13 lesson on the factors that affect economic development in less economically developed countries. The excellent relationship between the staff and students enables each student to achieve her full potential, and this is appreciated by students of all backgrounds.
147. The subject is very well led and managed. The students receive very clear guidelines to promote high standards of achievement and they make very good progress. The enthusiastic approach to the subject has created a strong community spirit among students and staff. Discussions with students resulted in spontaneous comment to the effect that, throughout their time studying geography, it had never been so enjoyable as over the previous two years, because of the way the department is managed. The teachers are always available before and after school, at break and lunch times, to give support with work whenever it is required. The range and quality of fieldwork is a major attraction for the students. Although there are no computers for student use in the department they make good use of the central facilities and home computers. Very good improvements have been made since the last inspection. High standards have been maintained, schemes of work up-dated, new resources acquired and a new syllabus introduced to suit the needs and interests of the students.

## History

Provision in history is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results are very high in AS and A2-level examinations: students achieve very well
- Teaching is consistently very good, with teachers knowing their subject very well and having a good understanding of students' needs
- Students work well collaboratively and independently, but a few need additional support

## Commentary

148. Results achieved in 2002 in AS and A2-level examinations were very well above those nationally and were similarly high in 2003. The results have been consistent over the last three years. Students of all backgrounds achieve very well.
149. Observation of work and learning in lessons during the inspection confirmed these high standards and very good levels of achievement. Students are developing as high quality historians. Year 12 students learn to use reference and research techniques very effectively in analysing and interpreting evidence. In a lesson in Year 13, students demonstrated that they

are becoming increasingly confident in analysing and expressing their views in relation to their chosen independent investigations about a period in history. Students are accessing university libraries and resources, researching their chosen topic, questioning their sources very well, and can demonstrate their understanding by summarising their approaches in a few minutes as a spidergram on an A4 sheet. Year 13 students are building a very detailed understanding of the marking requirements of A2-level examinations, to improve their own essay writing. The students are very keen and participate fully in their learning, although a few need additional prompting with the improvement and completion of their written tasks.

150. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use it well to support learning, balancing group discussions with appropriate intervention to make clear the complexity and stages of the process and to consolidate and build on students' understanding. They have good and friendly relationships with their students whom they know well, and they plan lessons to meet individual needs effectively. They engage students well in discussions, helping them along by building on their interests and experiences, particularly in relation to essays and assignments. They monitor and evaluate students' work well and guide them on how to improve. Through teaching and discussion they make very good links with students' spiritual, moral and cultural development.
151. Leadership and management of history are very good. A good system of monitoring and evaluating students' work is in place and relevant support is provided for students. Accommodation and resources are adequate. High standards have been maintained since the last inspection.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

### **Design and technology**

Provision in design and technology is **very good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve very well: standards are high
- Students' attitudes, independent learning, and study skills are excellent
- Teaching is very good; excellent subject knowledge is effectively communicated
- Strong emphasis is placed on design principles and good use is made of innovative technology
- Curricular links made with designers and design movements broaden students' experience
- Student numbers have been low but are increasing

#### **Commentary**

152. The standards of work on AS and A2-level courses in product design are well above average. Students have gained high grades in the past, but the relatively small number of students taking the examinations makes comparison with national figures difficult. The design process is followed well and graphical presentation in design sheet work is of very good standard. ICT is used extensively to present and research ideas. The use of computer-aided design is good and the use of computer-aided manufacture is developing well. Students' work shows a clear understanding of the aims and objectives of the course and assessment criteria. When developing design briefs and specifications for products students understand the importance of giving consideration to the products' performance, aesthetic qualities and method of construction, as well as value for money.
153. Students have excellent attitudes to the subject and to learning. They are strongly committed to the courses, and have an excellent capacity to work independently. The achievement of students of all backgrounds is very good in relation to their prior attainment and individual capabilities. Students spoken to say that they find their design work very interesting and challenging and appreciate the many good opportunities offered by the department: they work

hard to make best use of them. Very good progress and achievement were observed in lessons and folder work, both in terms of knowledge and application of design theory and in the development of practical skills. Students' design ideas are highly original and finished products are professionally made.

154. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Enthusiastic presentation of projects places strong emphasis on the design side, yet is very well integrated with technical aspects through theory and practical work. The very motivating and challenging assignments set for students reveal high-quality subject expertise and the teachers' high expectations of the students. Varied teaching strategies promote interest and the very good individual feedback to students, both orally and on evaluation sheets, provides excellent guidance.
155. The courses are very well managed and led, with the teachers, the technician and students working with a shared commitment to raise standards. Since the last inspection improvement has been good, with effective use of new technology. Student numbers were low but are now increasing. Development plans address important issues, including the further development and use of computer-aided design software, and more curricular links with design movements.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA**

Courses in art, drama and music are provided. The focus of the inspection was on art and music. Lessons in drama could not be sampled because of the timing of the inspection days in school and rehearsals for the drama festival. A2-level results in drama in 2003 were average but in 2002 they were high and analysis of students' files at the inspection indicated similarly high standards of written work.

### **Art and design**

Provision in art and design is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Examination results are very high
- Students are accomplished and confident in the subject, aided by excellent attitudes and a strong desire to do well
- Teaching is excellent; teachers convey enthusiasm and have very good subject knowledge
- Accommodation is cramped; there is a shortage of space for large-scale work and storage

### **Commentary**

156. Examination results in 2002 were very high. Although not quite as high in 2003, AS and A2-level results were still very high with over half the students gaining grade A. Results have been consistently well above the national average since the last inspection. Students of all backgrounds achieve very highly.
157. Standards seen and achievement were very high. A particular strength is the independence students display in planning and developing their work. Guided very well by their teachers, students use the skills they have learned earlier to experiment with ideas in a wide range of media. They recognise the expressive potential of materials and processes, including digital manipulation using ICT, and they are confident enough to take occasional risks. Through thorough research and visits to galleries and museums, students make excellent reference in their own work to that of professional artists and designers. As a result, students' work is accomplished and rich in multi-cultural links.
158. Teaching is excellent. Teachers pay careful attention to examination requirements, analysing results and acting upon findings. Regular monitoring and discussion of progress occur in an atmosphere of trust and support and give students a clear idea of how well they are doing and

how to improve further. Topics draw effectively on matters important to the students, particularly on issues that are sensitive and deal with feelings. Students are encouraged to find a personal voice and express their opinions visually and in writing. With such an approach, the department makes a strong contribution to the moral and spiritual provision in the school and to students' personal development. Students make good use of opportunities to visit top quality galleries and museums both in London and in Europe. However, cramped accommodation limits the scope of practical work, its storage and display.

159. The department is led very well with commitment, energy and flair. Courses and teaching are well managed. Improvements since the last inspection have been very good. More students are choosing to take art and design. Standards have risen and the department makes a significant contribution to the creative life of the school.

## Music

Provision in music is **excellent**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards reached are very high because students achieve excellently
- Teaching and learning are excellent
- Instrumental tuition is of very high quality
- A wide range of extra-curricular opportunities enriches and extends learning
- Staff and students cope in very difficult accommodation and with limited resources

### Commentary

160. In the last three years, results for the small numbers of students taking AS and A2-level examinations have been very high. Students also play instruments very competently. Overall, standards are excellent, confirmed by inspection evidence in lessons and extra-curricular activities, including rehearsals of the training and chamber orchestras, and the 'big band' group. Students of all backgrounds achieve very highly.
161. Students work enthusiastically and very hard. Year 13 students studying performance and composition analysed a Bach chorale very ably. They had well above-average understanding of chords and counterpoint and also the ability to hear parts of the chorale. High standards are vigorously promoted in extra-curricular groups, which also include younger students. In the rehearsal of the overture to Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* and Saint-Saens' *Danse Macabre*, practice by sections of the orchestra developed students' confidence, accuracy and understanding of how each part fits together. Over the duration of the rehearsal (40 minutes) noticeable improvement was made so that the rehearsal sounded like a symphony orchestra at work. In an extremely well led rehearsal of chamber works by Bach and Shostakovich relentless demand for more quality and precision and excellent response by students (mostly sixth formers) achieved musical articulation and intonation very far above average - and comparable to that which might be heard in a music school.
162. Teaching and learning are excellent. Very high levels of subject competence among teachers and instrumentalists, together with extremely high expectations, help the students, who are keen, enthusiastic and work hard, to achieve outstandingly well. Work is very well organised and perceptively taught so that students build on their strengths. Adequate use is made of ICT. A keen sense of accuracy among teachers, coupled with students' own drive for perfection, help to raise standards of performance and composition. Students are very efficient learners and work hard in very difficult surroundings. Enthusiasm for the subject has meant that numbers have doubled recently, but this puts a great strain on all involved in the students' work.

163. Leadership and management are excellent and have steered considerable improvements over the last few years. Provision is much appreciated by students and their parents. The only limitations are the very inadequate accommodation and shortage of resources, including ICT.

## **BUSINESS**

### **Economics**

Provision in economics is **very good**.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are well above the national average
- Students make very good progress and develop excellent knowledge and skills
- Teaching, which is very good and sometimes excellent, is very well managed
- Students do not make enough use of ICT to develop their key skills, and they use a limited range of sources in research

#### **Commentary**

164. Economics is well established and popular in the sixth form. Overall, standards in lessons and work seen at AS and A2-level are well above average. Results in 2003 were very high, with nearly all of the students entered gaining A and B grades. Results surpassed those of 2002 which were well above average, maintaining the high trend from previous years.
165. Students of all backgrounds achieve very well in lessons, in this subject which is new to them. Standards in lessons and work seen of current Year 12 and 13 students were well above course expectations. AS-level students' notes were well organised, key terms such as elasticity were defined in depth, and their evaluations contained sufficient detail. Students' oral explanation of concepts was well above average. Written description and analysis in class were less secure. Students did not make enough use of ICT to analyse economic data using spreadsheets. However, their diagrams and supply and demand curves were clear, well drawn and correctly labelled to analyse firms' competitive positions. Students' numeracy skills were outstanding.
166. Teaching and learning are very good. In one lesson, teaching was excellent. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge underpinned enthusiastic class discussion. Briskly paced lessons helped students to consolidate previous learning of difficult concepts. Students of all ethnic groups worked very well together. Teachers' excellent relationships with students are helped by very thorough marking that is detailed and regular, although weaker students sometimes need more support in lessons. Students are keen and their skills as independent learners are very good. Homework is used effectively as preparation for future lessons but students in their research tend to draw on a limited range of materials, with relatively little that is current from newspapers or direct business contacts.
167. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. Students' progress is well monitored against predicted grades. High standards have been maintained since the time of the last inspection, although the subject was not reported upon in detail then.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

168. In addition to their A-level subjects, students in Year 12 attend a double lesson of the University Awards Programme (a certificated course) and Year 13 students have a double lesson of general studies. Year 12 students can choose to attend key skills classes in English and ICT, if they feel they need support (these are commented upon in the relevant subject sections).
169. Lessons of the University Awards Programme and of general studies were sampled. The former includes topics on health, sex and drugs awareness education and develops key skills



of working with others, improving performance and problem solving. In the lesson sampled students responded with sustained questioning to a talk presented by a visitor from NATO on the USA/UK alliance. The Year 13 general studies programme includes guidance on applications for higher education. In the session observed students benefited from guidance and interview practice provided by a governor who had herself taught at medical school. Overall the programme in Years 12 and 13 enhances the AS and A2-level provision and provides good guidance for higher education applications. The programme is taken seriously by students and encourages personal development and independence.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
How inclusive the school is		2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	1	1
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>		<b>1</b>
Students' achievement	1	1
<b>Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>		<b>1</b>
Attendance	2	2
Attitudes	1	1
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1	2
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		2
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>		<b>2</b>
The quality of teaching	2	2
How well students learn	2	2
The quality of assessment	3	4
How well the curriculum meets students needs	2	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		4
Support, advice and guidance for students	4	3
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>		<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	3	2
The leadership of the headteacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	4	2
The effectiveness of management	4	3

*Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).*