

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ILFORD COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL**

Barkingside, Ilford

LEA area: Redbridge

Unique reference number: 102850

Headteacher: Mr S Devereux

Lead inspector: Mr R Passant

Dates of inspection: 15 – 19 September 2003

Inspection number: 259162

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:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Male
Number on roll:	837
School address:	Fremantle Road Barkingside Ilford
Postcode:	IG6 2JB
Telephone number:	020 8551 6496
Fax number:	020 8503 9960
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Councillor M Hickey
Date of previous inspection:	2 February 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Iford County High School is an average sized selective grammar school for boys within Redbridge. There are 837 on roll, including 240 in the sixth form. The school has a very diverse and changing population from a range of ethnic heritages. The percentage of pupils whose mother tongue is not, or believed not to be, English is very high. No pupils are at an early stage of learning English. A third of the school (31.4 per cent) is White British and roughly a further third is Asian British Indian. The other third of pupils is mainly Asian British Pakistani, Bangladeshi and from other Asian heritages, although there are 20 (2.3 per cent) Black British Caribbean and roughly similar numbers of Chinese, White European, other and mixed heritage pupils. The percentage of pupils on the register for special needs is very small.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2728	Roderick Passant	Lead inspector	Citizenship
11104	Michael Fleming	Lay inspector	
15472	Paul Andrews	Team inspector	Music
11452	Ruth Armistead	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages French (sixth form) German (sixth form)
10984	Pamela Bishop	Team inspector	Science Biology (sixth form)
30545	David Castell	Team inspector	Geography Geography (sixth form)
4372	Ralph Fordham	Team inspector	Religious education Religious education (sixth form)
11969	John Hardy	Team inspector	Design and technology (sixth form)
27240	William Hooper	Team inspector	Latin Latin (sixth form)
27585	Ken Hounslow	Team inspector	Chemistry (sixth form)
14490	Susan Jackson	Team inspector	English as an additional language Special educational needs History
1240	John King	Team inspector	Art and design Art and design (sixth form)
2793	Ross Maden	Team inspector	Design and technology
31983	Debra Makin	Team inspector	Physical education
12179	Laurence Moscrop	Team inspector	Business education (sixth form)
28097	Sheila Nolan	Team inspector	Mathematics Mathematics (sixth form)
18032	Isobel Randall	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Information and communication technology (sixth form)
18950	Carmen Rodney	Team inspector	English English (sixth form)

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## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>12</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>16</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES</b>	<b>25</b>
The attainment of pupils with English as an additional language	
The language provision in the school	
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4</b>	
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>65</b>

## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **OVERALL EVALUATION**

Iford County High School is a very effective school, which provides very good value for money. It is very successful in ensuring that boys achieve well and attain high, and often very high, standards academically and in the personal attitudes and values pupils have for learning and for one another. The challenge and responsibility for the school of educating bright, able boys is met very well.

The evidence for the school's effectiveness is the pupils' and students'<sup>1</sup> achievements. The school is very successful in developing pupils' rigour of scholarship, independence of thought and self-esteem within a community characterised by: excellent relationships, racial harmony and, between pupils and between staff and pupils, strong mutual respect. The school creates an excellent ethos and a momentum for learning, which adds further value to the work pupils are asked to undertake, and the opportunities they are given. Individuals are known, valued and supported very well and given many and diverse opportunities to take responsibility and achieve success.

How all this is achieved is not easy to explain, particularly in a summary. There is a complex interplay of factors in this mix. What is important to stress is that these features, the ethos, the nature of the community, the development of disciplined enquiry are carefully structured. That said, key elements are:

#### **The school's main features are:**

- The good, often very good teaching and, overall, the excellent command teachers have of their subjects. Pupils rate their staff highly, recognise their expertise and commitment and see them as a key factor in the school's success in creating this very positive learning environment.
- The nature of the curriculum, the breadth, interest and challenge it presents suit the boys very well. It is enhanced further by the very good enrichment opportunities within the school and the very good use of homework.
- The care and welfare of pupils is very good.
- The leadership of the headteacher and the management by key staff are very effective and ensure that pupils and staff are both supported and accountable and that there is a relentless pursuit of higher standards. This process is supported by the school's very good whole-school evaluation systems.
- There are no major whole-school weaknesses apart from the quality of accommodation in physical education and the sixth form study space that is diluting the quality of the learning experience. There are, however, relatively minor but important issues relating to improving the current provision to ensure that standards are at their peak across all subjects. All these have already been identified by the school and are in the school development plan.

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS CHANGED SINCE THE PREVIOUS INSPECTION**

Students' and pupils' standards, academic and personal, have continued to rise. The school has made good improvements since the last inspection. In some aspects there has been very good progress, such as the improvement of teaching to ensure that higher-attaining pupils are challenged appropriately and within specific subject areas identified in the previous report. Middle management has improved as a result of staff development. Lapses in statutory requirements have all been addressed. Because of accommodation and other issues the school is still not able to include food technology and compliant materials in the boys' design and technology experience encouraged in the National Curriculum.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout the report, the term 'pupils' is used to describe boys attending school between the ages of 11 to 16 and the term 'students' to describe those in the sixth form.

## STANDARDS ACHIEVED

### Year 11 and 13 results

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools <sup>2</sup>
		2000	2001	2002	2002
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A*	A*	A*	B
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations		A	A	

*Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average  
For Year 11, similar schools are those whose pupils attained at the end of Year 9.*

Standards in GCSE are in the highest five per cent of schools nationally. Standards in all subjects at GCSE are above national averages, in most, significantly so. Standards at GCSE improved further in 2003. Standards in 2003 are well above average compared with other selective schools (using 2002 national data). Pupils at this school achieve well.

Standards in the 2002 Year 9 National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science are very high, in the top five per cent of schools. Across the school all pupils achieve well and some very well. Standards improved further, particularly those in science in 2003.

Pupils are very articulate, read very well, and writing is a strength. They are very numerate and are very competent users of information and communication skills (ICT).

Pupils subscribe whole-heartedly to the ethos of the school. Their standard of behaviour is very high, their attendance is excellent and their attitudes to learning are very positive. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of pupils' personal development are excellent.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Overall, the quality of education is very good. The school develops very good learning skills. Pupils are able to work independently and collaboratively very well and the amount of work that they get through is excellent. This learning ethos is founded on good and often very good teaching. It is the consistency of high quality teaching, high expectations, a quality of relationships of staff to pupils which engage, challenge and motivate further the boys, coupled with the fact that what is being taught is interesting and challenging across a broad range of subjects. The school provides a very good, broad curriculum that suits the needs of the pupils particularly well. Attention paid to the welfare of pupils is comprehensive and thorough. Pupils are provided with very good guidance and support for their academic and personal development.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the headteacher is very good. Leadership at departmental level is at least good in all departments. Management by key staff is very effective. The boys are supported well. The ethos of the school is excellent. Strategic planning is open and consultative. The governors are very effective.

## PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents share the school's high expectations of their sons and enthusiastically support its actions to realise them. Pupils fully appreciate the intellectual and social environment in the school; they revel in the learning opportunities provided. The school is keen to communicate with parents, values their views and respond to them well. Parents and the school work together very effectively for the benefit

<sup>2</sup> Similar schools are defined as schools in which pupils scored similar scores in Year 9 tests, it is not a direct comparison with selective boys' schools.



of the pupils. Parents appreciate most aspects of the school, including its ethos and expectations, and the care taken of their sons. Some concerns were expressed in the questionnaires about the range of activities provided for pupils and the information provided about their progress. Inspection findings show the range of activities in lessons and the range of extra-curricular activities to be very good. Parents have a good number of opportunities to discuss their sons with teachers at formal meetings and on demand. They receive extensive annual reports, although the quality of reporting varies. The school's relationships with other institutions are satisfactory.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The most important things the school should do to improve are already identified in the school development plan. That is to:

- improve the quality of study accommodation for sixth formers and music and physical education accommodation;
- ensure that standards are at their peak across all subjects by developing consistency within and across departments, particularly in relation to:
  - the use of assessment, reporting and use of data to foster learning, building on the good practice evident in some departments;
  - teaching approaches which encourage pupil discussion and the developing language needs of some pupils and the use of ICT.

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SIXTH FORM**

The sixth form has 240 male students. It is larger than most and is ethnically very diverse. Although almost all Year 11 students progress into the sixth form, approximately 30 boys enter the school at this stage and some are drawn from beyond the LEA boundaries. To enter the sixth form, students must achieve six subjects at GCSE with grade C or above and at least a grade B in the subjects they wish to study. All students follow GCE A-level courses and are able to select from a range of 23 subjects. The school offers two study programmes at A level, enabling higher-attaining students with 8 GCSE grades A\* to B to take four, rather than three, chosen A-level courses. At the end of Year 13, almost all students continue their education at university, some after taking a gap year. A very small proportion of students go straight into employment. There are no students with statements of educational need, and only one is on the school's register of special needs.

## **OVERALL EVALUATION**

Sixth form provision is very good, overall. The sixth form caters very well for its current students through a very good range of academic courses, and provides a very positive environment for their personal development. The quality of teaching is very good; students make good progress in relation to their qualifications on entry and learn well. Very good leadership of the sixth form is contributing to continued improvement. The school works hard to value all students and to establish an ethos of freedom, trust and responsibility.

The sixth-form provision is cost-effective.

The main features of the sixth form are:

- Students make very good progress in relation to their qualifications on entry.
- Very good teaching and high levels of expertise lead to good standards of performance in public examinations.
- The range of curriculum provision caters very well for students' high aspirations and needs, and provides them with a combination of breadth, depth and intellectual challenge.
- Students feel that they are treated as adults and enjoy the sixth form; they show maturity in their approach to school life, and value the trust and strong relationships, which characterise the sixth form.
- Students relate well to one another in an exemplary multicultural, multi-faith community.

The school is aware of the need to provide more extensive and better quality study and common room facilities, as the school cannot accommodate all students who wish to engage in private study between lessons.

Since the last inspection the management of the sixth form has been restructured and much improved systems of sixth form monitoring and support have been introduced. Standards have risen.

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

Judgements about the provision<sup>3</sup> 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	<p><b>English:</b> Excellent. Results are consistently high and most students exceed expectations. Students work at a high standard because of the very good quality of teaching.</p> <p><b>French:</b> Very Good. Standards are very good due to the wealth of authentic materials, contact with native speakers and the effective teaching.</p> <p><b>German:</b> Good. Good teaching and the number of enrichment opportunities contribute to good standards.</p>
Mathematics	<p><b>Mathematics:</b> Very good. Standards in AS and A2 level mathematics are consistently well above average. Students benefit from good teaching and learn to adopt a scholarly approach to their work</p>
Science	<p><b>Biology:</b> Very Good. Standards are high and students make good progress throughout the modular course. Good teaching and very good management of the subject support excellent learning.</p> <p><b>Chemistry:</b> Good. Students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment because of the good teaching they receive and their excellent attitudes to learning.</p> <p><b>Physics</b> (This subject was sampled rather than fully inspected). Results in 2003 were significantly higher than national averages. In 2002 two-thirds of students taking the examination gained A or B grade.</p>
Information and communication technology	<p><b>ICT</b> Good. Standards in AS and A2 are above average. The course meets the needs of students, is well taught and develops good habits of independent learning.</p> <p><b>Computing:</b> Good. The subject knowledge and teaching of specialists within the department, provides a high level of challenge to students. Standards in coursework are very good.</p>
Humanities	<p><b>Geography:</b> Very Good. Very good teaching engages students' interest. Thorough assessment supports their learning well. The number of students taking geography has increased significantly in recent years.</p> <p><b>History:</b> (This subject was sampled rather than fully inspected). Excellent. Very good quality teaching and learning leads to very high attainment. Results, which are significantly above average, show a continuous trend upwards.</p> <p><b>Religious education:</b> Very Good. Standards are well above average in both AS and A2 courses. The quality of teaching is very good and students make very good progress.</p>

<sup>3</sup> This judgement is a summative judgement made on the quality and range of curriculum provided within the subject: the way the subject is organised, the quality of teaching and learning, the achievement of pupils and the resource provision. These judgements are specific to the subject. Whilst it is appropriate to use this judgement to compare the provision for a specific subject between different schools, it is inappropriate to use this judgement to make relative comparisons between subjects within the same school because like is not being compared with like.

	<b>Classical Studies:</b> Very Good. Students respond well to very good teaching and maximise their potential.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Very Good. Standards in <b>Electronics</b> are well above average. Standards in <b>Production Design</b> are above average. The high quality of teaching and the commitment of students underpin the very good provision.
Visual and performing arts and media	<b>Music:</b> Good. The head of department's superb musical skills and his excellent teaching give students a rare opportunity to learn fast and reach very high levels of musical understanding and performance.  <b>Art:</b> Good. Good teaching leads to effective learning. Students produce expressive and imaginative work.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	There is good provision on the timetable for recreational sport in Year 12. Although there is currently no course running, there is opportunity on the options timetable for Sports Studies at AS and A2 levels
Business	<b>Business Education:</b> Very Good. Very good teaching expertise leads to very good learning and achievement. Examination results are well above the national average. The department has significant links with local business, which makes learning meaningful.
General education	The subject was sampled only. All students in Year 12 take General Studies as part of a personal, social and health education programme and attain high standards because of teaching that is stimulating.

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*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

Form tutors and subject teachers provide very good quality support and guidance in Years 12 and 13. Information about sixth form courses is very good and students are well prepared for the requirements of the A-level courses. There are regular reporting procedures and students are very well informed about their progress. The quality of guidance offered in preparation for university entry is very good.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management in the sixth form are very good. The A-level programme is co-ordinated and monitored well. Planning for future developments is good.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

There were 97 responses to the student questionnaire. Approximately a third of respondents were critical of aspects of the sixth form. These concerns were not expressed in the many formal and informal discussions, which took place between inspectors and a significant number of students. Discussions indicate that students are very positive about the sixth form. They particularly value the high quality of teaching, the academic support they receive and the range of subjects offered. The strengths identified are justified, but some of the concerns expressed by some students in the questionnaire are not. Issues relating to a lack of careers advice in Year 11 were particular to the current Year 13 and have since been resolved by the school. Individual teachers and sixth form managers make considerable efforts to provide help and support for those who have personal problems. Students benefit from a varied extra-curricular programme and the school endeavours to offer enhancement activities which correspond to student choice.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

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

Pupils attain high standards in GCSE examinations, significantly above the national average in almost all subjects. The average point score in 2003 was well above average compared with other selective schools<sup>4</sup> (compared with 2002 data - 2003 data is not yet available). Well over half the grades gained were A\* or A grades. Standards have improved since the last inspection. Pupils with English as an additional language and special educational needs make similar progress to their peers

#### Main strengths

- Pupils achieve well across the school and attain high standards.
- Overall standards are well above average compared with other selective schools.

#### Commentary

1. Standards of attainment on entry to the school are well above average. Pupils achieve well and make good progress and achieve standards that are very high at the end of Year 9 as indicated in the following table:

#### *Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2002<sup>5</sup>*

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	41.7 (40.4)	33.3 (33.0)
mathematics	47.2 (47.3)	34.7 (34.4)
science	40.6 (41.0)	33.3 (33.1)

*There were 120 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

2. These results place the school in the top 5 per cent of schools nationally. When compared with similar schools - that is, schools whose pupils gained a similar average point score in the Year 6 tests in primary school - mathematics is above average and English below and science well below average. The school, concerned about the relative difference in performance, particularly between mathematics and science, took specific steps to improve the science tests taken at the end of Year 9. Results in 2003 show significant improvement.
3. Pupils on entry have less advanced verbal skills than, for example, their ability to use number. There are some pupils, for example, still at the stage of developing their English language skills. This accounts for the fact that English is below average compared with similar schools.
4. The trend in the national tests is broadly in line with the national trend, although there was a significant improvement in 2003.
5. Results at GCSE in 2002 place the school in the top 5 per cent of schools. Comparative data is not available for 2003. Perhaps, more importantly, the results indicate that attainment in 2002 was above average compared with similar schools - that is schools, which scored similar average points in the Year 9 tests.

<sup>4</sup> This comparison includes both boys and girls in selective schools.

<sup>5</sup> This is the last year for which there is comparative national data. Please note the national data quoted is for all schools and includes boys' and girls' performance.

### Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2002

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	98.3 (98.3)	49.9 (48.4)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	99.1 (98)	90.9 (90.9)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	52.4 (n/a)	39.8 (n/a)

*There were 115 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

6. Results in 2003 show a significant improvement, with well over half of the entries being awarded A\* and A grades. The percentage achieving 5 A\* to C grades was 99.2 per cent.
7. It is important to point out that with the numbers of pupils in the year group that the under-performance of one or two pupils, through illness or personal difficulties, can make a significant percentage difference.
8. The uncapped average point score, i.e. the average score achieved from all the examinations taken was above average in 2002 and well above average in 2003 when compared with selective schools (using 2002 national data). Pupils achieve well compared with other selective schools.
9. Pupils on the school's register of special needs make similar progress to their peers, as do pupils with English as an additional language.<sup>6</sup>
10. Pupils are articulate and have the opportunity to participate in high-level debate in many but not all subjects. Reading skills are very good. Pupils have very good research skills. Their ability to analyse texts is very good. The quality of writing is a strength. The highest attaining pupils write with precision and flair. Pupils have numerical skills of a high order and they use them well in subjects such as geography and science. Information communication technology skills are also of a high order.
11. There are a number of factors in addition to those identified in the summary, which also contribute to bring about these high standards.
  - The competition for places means that those who are successful know that they will have high expectations placed upon them. They know that they are joining a school with a long tradition of high scholastic attainment but they also appreciate that they are expected to develop maturity, independence of thought, high standards of personal organisation and attitudes to learning and towards other people within the community of the school of a very high order. Pupils respond to these challenges well because of consistent good quality teaching, the challenge of a rich curriculum and a community that is at ease with itself.
  - The role models presented by older pupils and students.
  - The fact that parents are very supportive and have high aspirations for their children.

### Sixth Form

12. Overall results of General Certificate of Education A-level examinations at the end of the sixth form are well above average. These results demonstrate a trend upwards. In 2003, nearly two-thirds of entries for A2 examinations gained grades A to B. The average point score of

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<sup>6</sup> The inspection team was charged with the additional responsibility of examining the standards achieved by these pupils and a fuller report is included in the section 'Other specified features'.

- 327.1<sup>7</sup> was well above the national average. Sixth form results represent good progress across Years 12 and 13. Almost all students progress from AS to A2 examinations.
13. Sixth form students' attainment in lessons and in work seen during the inspection is generally above course expectations. In almost all of the lessons observed achievement was at least satisfactory and in four out of five lessons students made good or very good gains in learning. Students' intellectual maturity and their capacity for independent study contribute significantly to their progress in lessons and assignments.
  14. Students' standards in numeracy are very high. They also demonstrate strengths in literacy. Overall, communication skills are very well developed. Evidence from the inspection indicates that the independent use of ICT is very good. Sixth form students make use of the Internet for research and independent learning. Some teachers also make good use of ICT in lessons, but the provision is patchy across the curriculum.

#### **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	96.4 (95.7)	N/a (94.8)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	62 (59)	N/a (39.4)
Average point score per pupil	327.1 (320.7)	N/a (263.3)

*There were 126 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

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

Pupils subscribe whole-heartedly to the ethos of the school. Their standard of behaviour is very high, their attendance is excellent and their attitudes to learning are very positive. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural aspects of pupils' personal development are excellent.

#### **Main strengths**

- Exemplary relationships between pupils of all ages and backgrounds.
- Pupils' mutual support and effective collaboration.
- Pupils' relationships with teachers and other adults.
- Pupils' sensitivity to, and tolerance of, points of view and beliefs other than their own.
- Pupils actively seek knowledge and understanding of themselves and the world.
- Pupils' eagerness to share and explore new ideas.
- Pupils' excellent respect for the feelings values and beliefs of others; their self-esteem and awareness of the spiritual and moral dimensions that shape choices about how they and others shape their lives is also excellent.
- The school very successfully stimulates a desire to learn in pupils.

#### **Commentary**

15. Enjoyment of lessons and a desire to succeed combine to make punctual attendance a top priority for pupils and their families. The level of attendance is very high; truancy is practically inconceivable. Attendance in the sixth form is slightly lower due to flexible study arrangements, but remains consistently well above the national average and has been improved recently by modifying registration procedures.
16. Pupils are actively interested in learning and in developing their personal qualities. They fully appreciate the opportunities that teachers provide for them to gain knowledge and skills and to explore new ideas. They work together very well both in classroom activities and as members of a coherent school community in which responsibility is distributed widely and accepted

<sup>7</sup> This scoring system is used by the university clearing system UCAS.

readily. Pupils are encouraged to think beyond an immediate issue. This leads them to a deeper understanding of topics, including speculation about innovative solutions and about moral and social implications.

17. The school is very effective in fostering respect, so that no group feels neglected or oppressed. Pupils are able and willing to discuss such complex personal matters as religious faith, which is a strong tribute to the continuing harmonious nature of the community, noted in the last inspection report. They show a broad interest in, and appreciation of, sporting and cultural opportunities to extend their experiences beyond the content of lessons, although the range of cultural activity within the curriculum does not fully reflect the diversity of the pupil population. Pupils are encouraged to care for others, including through charitable and outreach work. The new peer-mentoring scheme is an outstanding example of mature mutual support by pupils, working in partnership with the school and with the approval of parents. Pupils show respect for all adults working in the school and appreciate their contribution; this is clearly demonstrated in the way that they are appreciative of the support they are given in the school office or in the way they respond to a quiet word from the site manager.
18. A particular feature of the school, already described under standards, is the powerful contribution made by older students and pupils in terms of acting as role models to younger pupils. In addition, within the many activities that take place, the expertise of a pupil from whatever age group is generously recognised by others. Thus younger pupils sometimes take the lead in a specific area or activity because they have the specific skills and expertise that is recognised by other older pupils. There are many opportunities for pupils and students to mix in interest groups where the demarcation of older and younger is unimportant and this in turn helps to unify the school.

## Attendance

Attendance is excellent as indicated by the figures for the latest reporting year.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	1.0	School data	0.0
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.*

## Behaviour

Overall behaviour is very good. There are occasional lapses. Exclusion, either temporary or permanent is only used as a last resort after all other steps have been taken. The exclusion figures for the last year are significantly higher than what the school regards as normal; the previous year there were no exclusions, for example. A significant number of the boys excluded this year were all involved in one particular incident.

### Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background

### Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
263	5	0
1	0	0
22	0	0

Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	10	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	11	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	252	2	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	56	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	24	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	109	1	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	20	1	0
Black or Black British – African	4	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	2	0	0
Chinese	34	0	0
Any other ethnic group	24	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	9	1	0

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

### **Sixth form**

19. Students' attitudes to the school and to their work are excellent. They were exceedingly supportive of the school and spoke very highly of the overall quality of the sixth form.
20. Students are punctual and settle well to lessons. They show very strong commitment to learning and can be relied upon to work diligently at home and at school. Teachers offer high levels of support to students. The atmosphere in the sixth form is one of mutual respect and consideration. Students value their teachers and work very productively, either on their own or in groups. Secure relationships, established over time, prove to be rich and rewarding for both staff and students.
21. The sixth form is an exemplary multicultural community characterised by an exceptional level of international harmony. Students from a wide range of cultures and faiths relate very well to one another and share equal value as members of the school.
22. The personal development of students is very good. Students are expected to assume responsibilities and to contribute to the development of the whole school. A good range of activities is open to students through the school's *portfolio scheme*. In addition to organising and leading faith assemblies, students may, for example, run sports activities coaching younger boys' teams, or take part in the reading scheme for Year 7. (For the latter activity they receive professional training from the local education authority). They also engage in community service, such as working in hospitals in preparation for a career in medicine. Sixth-formers contribute to drama productions, a good range of musical activities and other whole-school events.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

Overall, the quality of education is very good. The school develops very good learning skills. Pupils are able to work independently and collaboratively very well and the amount of work that they get through is excellent. This learning ethos is founded on good and often very good teaching. The school provides a very good, broad curriculum that suits the needs of the pupils particularly well. Attention paid to the welfare of pupils is comprehensive and thorough. Pupils are provided with very good guidance and support for their academic and personal development.



## Teaching and learning

Teaching is good in the main school. It is often very good. It is very good in the sixth form. It is the consistency of high quality teaching and teacher's excellent subject knowledge that leads to very good learning skills. The quality of the assessment of students' work is effective and contributes well to sustaining high standards and promoting further improvements. The school has well-managed systems for promoting the pupils' performance and for consistently supporting their progress. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection, particularly in relation to teaching higher-attaining pupils.

### Main strengths

- Excellent subject knowledge and high expectations, effective planning and good relationships ensure that pupils achieve well and attain high and often very high standards.
- There is very good practice evident within the school with regard to teaching approaches and uses of assessment that need to be shared and more consistently used across the school.

### Commentary

24. The community of the school, in the aspirations and attitudes it holds and enacted in the daily corridor and classroom encounters, gives an underlying momentum to the boys' learning. There is an implicit and explicit very high expectation laid on the boys when they join the school that they should achieve. The result is that they apply themselves, take responsibility for their learning and are motivated to do well. Their overall application and the amount of work that they get through is excellent. They have very good learning skills; they pick up new knowledge, skills and understanding of concepts with enthusiasm. Their learning skills adds considerable value to what they are taught.
25. The fact that pupils and students in discussion express enormous respect for the staff, their expertise and their commitment says much. There is a strong sense in which all staff feel very accountable and are very committed to doing well for those boys for whom they have responsibility and this adds to the consistent 'press' for achievement in the school. Across the school, overall, members of staff display a command of their subject that is excellent, which, combined with their very high expectations, provides the spur and encouragement for the boys to achieve. This is further enhanced by the consistency of good, often very good teaching in lessons, which provides the pupils with the necessary skills to make good progress, achieve well and attain very high standards.
26. Teachers plan effectively work that is interesting and which engages pupils. Time is used most effectively in almost all lessons. However, the poor use of pupils' time accounts for a couple of the unsatisfactory lessons seen in the sample of lessons observed. The very good use of time is extended further by the very good use of homework, which reinforces and extends the learning opportunities within lessons. There is an insistence on very high standards of behaviour. Lapses in behaviour happen very infrequently. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good and help create an atmosphere in which pupils feel secure to express a viewpoint or opinion, or indeed make mistakes, without fear of ridicule. Teaching strategies are effective. The best lessons make full use of opportunities for discussion to allow pupils to rehearse their ideas, and there is good emphasis on identifying technical language. These strategies, relevant for all pupils but especially relevant to bilingual pupils, are not consistently used across all departments. Discussion, for example, is a strong feature of history, English and geography but opportunities are missed in science and mathematics.
27. Assessment supports learning, at least satisfactorily and sometimes well or very well in some subject areas. Generally, the marking of pupils' work is regular, frequent and often diagnostic so that most pupils are aware of the quality of their work and of how they can improve. Nevertheless, there are a few examples of less effective marking across a range of

departments, resulting in some inconsistency of practice. Routine marking in subjects other than English or history does not always draw attention to aspects of English and shows inconsistent correction of second language errors, such as correct tense, preposition and article usage.

28. Particularly good examples of involving pupils in the assessment of their own work are found in English, geography and music. In English, there is a close link between target-setting and the day-to-day assessment of the pupils' work. Other departments, for example, mathematics, are developing their own centralised systems to check pupils' development.
29. Most teaching uses assessment well to plan lessons and to ascertain what gains in learning pupils make in lessons. Teachers' questioning is a particular strength and questions are mostly well targeted, searching and challenging, enabling pupils to respond well and deepen their understanding. In some lessons, however, teaching misses opportunities to check on pupils' progress at intervals, particularly in younger year groups: in some mathematics classes, for example.
30. The assistant headteacher in charge of the whole-school assessment procedures manages the analysis and monitoring of the pupils' standards well in both the main school and throughout post-16 courses. Frequent review points provide an overview across all curriculum areas of the pupils' achievements against expected test levels and examination grades. Whole-school grade criteria support the validity of departmental judgements. The co-operative working of academic tutors, form tutors and pastoral and academic middle managers, sustain the school's high expectations of what individual pupils can achieve.
31. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection, particularly with regard to the challenge for higher-attaining pupils. The evidence of this lies in the significantly increased number of pupils attaining A\* in their GCSE examinations. Individual education plans for pupils identified as having additional needs are not being used consistently to reinforce pupils' learning targets, identified in the previous report. Whilst it is true that the attainment of pupils with special educational needs is well above average and they make good progress, it reflects the overall good relationships that exist. Members of staff are sensitive to and have been well prepared for teaching pupils with additional needs relating to a physical disability or impairment.

## **Sixth form**

Teaching and learning in the sixth form are very good. The sixth form provides a very stimulating environment in which pupils' have an excellent opportunity to develop intellectually.

## **Main strengths**

- Teachers' knowledge and understanding of their subject.
  - Their high expectations of student achievement.
  - Their meticulous attention to examination requirements.
32. Teachers apply their subject knowledge effectively and set clear objectives for their students. In lessons, challenging tasks involve students in a demanding range of activities. Students value the opportunities provided to sharpen their analytical skills and to think critically.
  33. Very good classroom relationships with groups of students underpin the very good teaching seen in the sixth form. Students make good gains in knowledge and understanding because of their high levels of motivation and their positive response to the teachers' high aspirations. Lessons provide students with the opportunity to enhance their confidence and to argue their viewpoints. Levels of concentration and students' involvement in lessons are very impressive. Teachers know students very well and set appropriate targets for individuals. Marking is

effective and significant use is made of examination criteria. Diagnostic comments keep students well informed of their standards and show them how they can improve.

34. Based on the student questionnaire and inspectors' discussions with students, it is clear that students feel that the standard of teaching in the sixth form is very high and they particularly appreciate the fact that teachers are readily available to provide additional help and advice when it is needed.
35. Judgements about the quality of teaching are not simply based on the statistics drawn from the lessons seen in the inspection but are based on the quality of work, the achievement of pupils, and the progress they are making over time. This inspection differs from the previous inspection in the amount of time allocated to it. This inspection saw a third fewer lessons and it is not, of necessity, a balanced sample. Seven lessons seen out of the total of 142 were less than satisfactory. These tended to be because of a professional misjudgement about the organisation of the lesson, learning and the achievement of pupils being less demanding than it should because of behaviour management or other reasons. The school is well aware of where there is the need for professional development in teaching and is providing the necessary support.

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 142 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4 (3%)	52 (37%)	44 (31%)	35 (25%)	6 (4%)	1 (1%)	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.*

**The curriculum**

The school provides a very good, broad curriculum that suits the needs of the pupils particularly well. It is not only very broad in the range of subjects covered but also in the breadth, depth and interest of what is taught within a subject. It is enhanced by an equally very good enrichment programme and supported very well by homework. Resources are satisfactory.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A broad, demanding curriculum which engages pupils' interests and which is suited very well to their needs. It is enriched by a very good extra-curricular provision and very good homework.
- An, overall, very good provision for personal, social and health education and citizenship education which could be refined further.
- Deficiencies in accommodation, particularly regarding the library and private study space but also for music and physical education, which cause restrictions to the quality of learning.

**Commentary**

36. The breadth of curricular opportunities is very good. Throughout the school the curriculum provides a broad and balanced education. In Years 7 to 9 the National Curriculum is enhanced by the addition of Classics in Year 7 and a second foreign language in Years 8 and 9. In design and technology, pupils do not have the opportunity to experience working in food or compliant materials. In Years 10 and 11, breadth is assured because all pupils follow twelve GCSE courses, including 'short' courses in technology, information technology and religious education, although the latter with very limited time. There is the opportunity to study two foreign languages in Years 10 and 11 and options in business studies and economics are popular. The curriculum is very appropriate for the aptitudes, interests and aspirations of the great majority of pupils. The school is alive to the needs of different groups of pupils: in Years 10 and 11, as in the sixth form, it sustains, as far as it can, courses with small numbers which add an important dimension to the pupils' curriculum. At present, the school is exploring ways in which it might reduce the number of subjects taken by a very small number of boys in Years 10 and 11.

37. The school has very well-developed curriculum programmes for students aged 14 to 19 years which ensures continuity and smooth progression from GCSE to sixth form courses.
38. Pupils speak highly of their work experience in Year 10. About one third of boys arrange their own placements, which are often chosen with a particular career in mind. The overall provision for personal, social and health education, including sex and drugs education, is very good, although review of the time allocated to various elements is required.
39. Arrangements for reviewing the curriculum are good. All staff has the opportunity to contribute to it by raising issues and attending regular curriculum committee meetings, which are open to all. Notable curriculum development has taken place within subjects, such as English, geography and history, which have also embraced strategies for promoting pupils' literacy skills.
40. The formal taught curriculum is enhanced by very good enrichment opportunities across a range of sporting, arts and other activities. Homework, too, extends the learning opportunities very successfully.
41. Across the school, resources are satisfactory, although access to ICT by other subjects has been limited until very recently. The school development plan identifies deficiencies in accommodation with regard to the library, indoor sporting facilities, music and sixth form private study space. It has sought to address aspects of the accommodation.

### **Sixth form**

42. The curriculum provision for the sixth form is excellent.
43. The selection of subjects is very well matched to the current students' aspirations and needs. Students follow a well-planned programme of general studies at AS level.
44. All students are required to participate in the extra-curricular programme and to select activities as part of a portfolio scheme. The school encourages students to initiate activities. For example, during the week of the inspection, scuba-diving sessions were offered in response to a student proposal. The school hopes that an increase in the voluntary sixth form capitation introduced this year will enable it to broaden the range of activities offered.

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

Attention paid to the welfare of pupils is comprehensive and thorough. Pupils are provided with very good guidance and support for their academic and personal development. Systems for ensuring their health and safety are good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good advice, based on a thorough understanding of pupils' needs.
- Extensive opportunities for pupils to seek support.
- Very good involvement of pupils through frequent discussion.
- Comprehensive child protection and health and safety procedures.

### **Commentary**

45. From their induction to the school to the discussion and advice that prepares them for life after school, pupils are cared for well. Very soon after joining the school they know their way around and understand procedures. They are successfully inducted into the caring ethos and rapidly form constructive relationships with their peers and with teachers. This underpins their

feeling of security and comfort, which allows them to concentrate on their intellectual and social development. They see the value and esteem attached to the achievements of their elders and are soon ready to emulate such successes.

46. Pupils have extensive opportunities to approach staff or other pupils for help with anything from coursework to bullying. They are confident of receiving a helpful response, whatever the problem. They receive very good support from teachers when they require advice about course or career options; this is based on teachers' very good, detailed knowledge of individuals' academic and social development. Pupils are involved closely in reviews of their academic progress and they benefit from discussions of targets. Their views are solicited in person and through the school council; pupils are confident that these opinions are taken seriously and have an impact on school life.
47. Appropriate attention is paid to health and safety issues, such as in physical education or science lessons or when preparing for a school trip. Staff are well briefed if pupils have particular needs due to disability or illness. Pupils are well cared for by trained first aiders if they are unwell.

## **Sixth form**

### **Assessment and Reporting**

48. The assessment of students following post-16 courses is, overall, good with close attention to the requirements of examination specifications. As a result, the students are clearly aware of what they have to achieve. Individual guidance is a strong feature of the assessment process with students well supported by good and immediate oral feedback in lessons. The assessment-of-progress records indicate significant improvements in the students' work over time. Day-to-day departmental assessment procedures vary according to subject requirements, but there remain some inconsistencies in practice in some curriculum areas.

### **Advice, support and guidance**

49. Students say that they receive good advice and guidance in relation to their studies. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, students indicated that they were provided with helpful and constructive advice when making their initial choice of A-level subjects. They found the printed information about subjects and courses clear, accurate and helpful. At the same time, they praised the accessibility of teaching staff, and felt that they would be able to seek help if they experienced academic difficulties.
50. Students who are underachieving are quickly identified by referral or by very good monitoring of performance data. Improved systems of tracking, introduced last year, highlight these students at risk and help them to analyse and evaluate their progress, and to use their study time effectively. Form tutors hold formal interviews with all students and underachieving student are targeted for additional support.
51. Provision for careers education is good. The quality of guidance offered in respect of higher education is very good. The programme for applying to university is monitored carefully and has recently been adapted to provide students with more extensive information and to ensure greater communication with parents. The teacher responsible for university entry has amassed significant knowledge and developed good links with universities.
52. There is scope to extend the links with other schools and to contribute to wider partnerships.
53. There are effective procedures to ensure students' health and safety.

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

Parents and the school work together very effectively for the benefit of the pupils. The school's relationships with other institutions are satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents are enthusiastic supporters of their sons' education.
- The school is keen to communicate with parents.
- The school values parents' views and responds to them well.

### **Commentary**

54. The school solicits parents' involvement in their sons' education through effective consultation. A recently developed home links group is active and useful and valued. During the inspection, for example, over 60 parents had the opportunity to meet the headteacher, deputies and a number of heads of year to discuss how the school works and how parents could support their sons. This link group both informs parents of developments in the school and helps them to understand how best to contribute to the educational process. Meetings are well attended and the results of discussions are disseminated to parents who are not present. The school appreciates the valuable contribution parents are making to their sons' education and there is a genuine desire to work in partnership with them.
55. Parents appreciate most aspects of the school, including its ethos and expectations, and the care taken of their sons. Some concerns were expressed in the questionnaires about the range of activities provided for pupils and about the information provided about their progress. Inspection findings show the range of activities in lessons and the range of extra-curricular activities to be very good. Parents have a good number of opportunities to discuss their sons with teachers at formal meetings and on demand. They receive extensive annual reports, although the quality of reporting varies because different teachers write different sections. Most provide very good, detailed summaries of individual pupils' achievements, including comments that indicate what they should do to progress further, but some are less personal and consequently less informative and less useful.
56. Appropriate information is gathered from pupils' primary schools, although some arrives later than desired. Links with other secondary schools have a rather low profile but are satisfactory. Pupils benefit from visitors in a number of subjects including personal and social education. Members of diverse parts of the wider community are represented on the governing body. Parents report that relations with faith groups are sensitive and welcoming. At present, few businesses are actively involved in supporting the school but many pupils benefit from work experience in local businesses or in more remote institutions.

### **Sixth form**

57. Parents are very pleased with the sixth form. Sixth form students are very positive about what the school is able to offer them. However, they would like the school to provide better study facilities. Due to the pressure on teaching space the provision for sixth form private study is inadequate. As a result, with school approval, some sixth form students currently work from home when they have free periods. This inevitably diminishes the sense of community in the sixth form.
58. Students in general feel that the school is responsive to their views and that they are able to assume a good level of responsibility. Students interviewed during the inspection week confirmed that they felt the sixth form worked very well.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Individuals matter in the school, particularly the pupils and students. They are supported by the unobtrusive but very good leadership and management systems. The school is characterised by high attainment and very high standards reflected in pupils' and students' attitudes to learning and towards each other.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership by the headteacher and key staff.
  - Very good management at senior level.
  - The governing body is very effective.
  - Finance is managed very well.
  - The challenge for the school lies in developing consistency within departments and a further sharing of the good practice between departments.
59. Pupils, students, staff and the governing body express a loyalty to the school and its deservedly high reputation. There is an unspoken, but nevertheless omnipresent, weight of history and recognition of past generations that have helped establish this reputation and which does contribute to, and to some extent help shape, the current learning ethos. When pupils join the school they are linked to a tradition of high achievement; to talk in terms of joining a 'club' sounds disparaging but, nevertheless, the school is an association dedicated to the high achievement of its boys, past and present. This sense of a tradition of scholarship is an important feature because it is precisely this that parents are aspiring to when they send their boys to this school. The impression gained is that many parents want their boys to be absorbed into this school culture whilst at the same time having their own cultural identity or possible additional needs recognised. For example, a number of parents went out of their way to praise the school for its sensitivity towards their boys' individual faith. Parents also have very high aspirations for their children.
60. These factors place somewhat unique additional pressures on the leadership of the school in:
- reconciling conservative traditional viewpoints within a school, which has to be, and is, responsive to the changing demands facing its students in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century;
  - being sensitive to the changing nature of its cohort;
  - recognising the very high aspirations that parents have for their sons yet having to balance these aspirations with what the school regards is best for the individual pupil.
- The headteacher balances all these pressures very well.
61. The headteacher and key staff lead the school very well. Across the school, leadership is at least good. The style is collegiate and open. The senior management team have a clear idea of the strengths of the school and where they want it to develop, based on clear evaluation procedures. Weaknesses are identified and tackled and strategic planning is very good. Departments are accountable and there is a constant pressure for the highest possible standards, not only in academic terms. The school is not complacent but ambitious for the pupils and students and indeed for the staff.
62. Management at senior level is also very good and it is at least good across the school. There has been significant investment in and development of middle managers since the previous inspection. The school analyses examination data very effectively and individuals are tracked carefully as they progress across the school. Effective systems are in place to support individuals. There is a rigorous system of departmental reviews that not only identifies strengths and weaknesses but also assists in developing strategies to improve. Day-to-day management is very good. Across the school there is a strong sense of teamwork. Support staff are very highly valued for the contribution that they make and the manner in which they support and contribute to the pupils' development. The English as an additional language co-ordinator recognises the need for tighter tracking of pupil progress, particularly at departmental



level and for more detailed profiles, showing pupils developing language competence, to be shared with staff and pupils. There is also scope for better use of individual education plans. The preparation of the staff for the admission of a pupil with additional physical needs has been very good.

63. Performance management is good and is bringing about improvement effectively. The school policy meets legal requirements. The objective setting cycle for teachers is scheduled to coincide with the well-established whole-school planning cycle; this ensures that teachers' objectives link meaningfully to whole-school planning. Lesson observation and review meetings ensure that teachers are helped to adhere to their objectives. Training needs are identified where relevant.
64. The school's contribution to initial teacher training is good. The school works well with its partner institutions and provides a supportive and suitable programme for students. It recruits some of its newly qualified teachers from these institutions. This is beneficial to the school. The support and guidance provided for newly qualified teachers is good, with a thorough induction programme beginning before they start teaching at the school. Good support arrangements are in place with each teacher having a mentor for guidance in their subject, and a 'buddy' for more informal help if they need it. The induction programme is informative and helpful and the school and the local education authority provide good in-service opportunities. Experienced colleagues regularly observe their lessons and they have the opportunity to observe experienced teachers and to observe each other teaching. The graduate and registered teacher programme is established with the school working closely with the recommending body.
65. There is a well-constructed and comprehensive system for the support and ongoing professional development of staff. All teachers joining the school attend the introductory sessions of an induction programme. Any newly qualified teachers go on to complete this as part of their statutory support and assessment arrangements. Financial allocations are sufficient and shared equitably to enable all teaching and support staff to update their knowledge and skills in line with the demands of departmental and whole-school development plans. In the past much of the training was provided externally and focused on subject-specific work with the examining boards. However, one in-service day each year is now devoted to whole-school matters, e.g., behavioural management, and teachers are also encouraged to share good practice across departments. For example, a recent session at a staff meeting organised by the teacher responsible for English as an additional language, discussed the use of group work as an effective teaching strategy.
66. The school has managed to attract well-qualified teachers to replace staff who have left the school.
67. The governing body is very effective. The chairman expresses the determination that the school should be a 'centre of excellence with regard to the gold standard of Advanced level work' and this provides a vision and a basis to support the school and to question appropriately senior management team decisions. Members of the governing body have a clear understanding of their role, are supportive and actively involved with the school. They play a full part in policy making, setting and agreeing targets and strategic planning. Governors and senior management feel that the relationship between them is excellent. There is considerable professional and personal expertise on the governing body and the committee structure is effective.
68. Financial management, in support of the school's priorities, is very good. The school ensures that the allocation of funds is well targeted at the priorities stated in the school development plan. Reports are presented to the governors' finance committee on a regular basis and this ensures accountability. There are no significant outstanding issues from the last audit report. The administration uses appropriate systems for financial management. In addition, there are

plans to improve these even further. All grant moneys are used for the purpose for which they are intended. The school applies the principles of best value well. Overall, the school provides very good value for money.

### Sixth form

69. Very good leadership, emanating from the headteacher but also by other key staff provides a clear direction for the development of the sixth form and is well supported by senior management, governors and the staff of the school. Overall, daily administrative arrangements, systems and procedures work very well. The sixth form is a very important part of the school as a whole. Students are known well individually and benefit from very good levels of personal support. The majority now enjoy prefect status; as such, they take their duties seriously and contribute very effectively to a range of school events. The school has recently adjusted the prefect selection procedure to include greater consultation and inclusiveness.
70. The sixth form attracts students from the local area and overseas to fill the small number of places which become available each year. Those students joining the sixth form are provided with very good support. Students work well together and exemplary levels of mutual respect between people of different ethnic, national and religious background are displayed.
71. The sixth form is cost-effective.

### Financial information

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

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,181,703	Balance from previous year	187,034
Total expenditure	3,004,704	Balance carried forward to the next	176,998
Expenditure per pupil	3,589		

### OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

- As part of the inspection, Ofsted required the inspection team to give specific attention to two aspects. Namely:
- the standards attained by pupils and students with English as an additional language, and
- the provision for languages in the school.

### THE ATTAINMENT OF PUPILS WITH ENGLISH AS AN ADDITIONAL LANGUAGE

#### Main features:

- Bilingual pupils make the same progress as their peers. It is not always clear the extent to which pupils use their first language.
- There do not seem to be significant barriers to impede their progress. The school screens the new intake for pupils' additional language needs and provides support within departments on a rolling programme.
- Given the changing nature of the school's cohort, the school is aware of the possible emerging language needs of some of its pupils. It needs to share the good practice seen, in, for example, history, particularly the encouragement of pupil discussion and clarifying of technical terms and also increasing staff awareness of the possible implicit cultural context of some examination questions.

72. There has been a steady rise in the number of pupils at the school whose first language is not English - increasing from 38 per cent in 2000/1 and 40 per cent in 2001/2 to 47 per cent in 2002/3 (statistics are not yet available for 2003/4). There are no pupils in the early stages of language acquisition.
73. However, what is less clear is the extent to which pupils and students use their first language. In conversation with a small number of pupils specifically about this issue they were clear that they regarded English as their main language and their first language, if used, was used in for example, conversation with grandparents.
74. Analysis by the school indicates that bilingual pupils perform as well as their peers in GCSE, although not in Year 9 National Curriculum tests. Indeed, although numbers are small, there is some indication that the ethnic category that performed slightly less well at GCSE was white UK boys.
75. The majority of bilingual pupils entering the school do so as fluent English speakers at language level 4. However, there are a number of pupils who achieve at a lower level in the verbal compared with the quantitative tests and non-verbal tests. The school analysed the National Curriculum test papers in 2003 with regard to ethnicity and English as an additional language. Eighteen boys achieved level 5 in the English tests (no boy gained a grade lower than level 5); of these, nearly two-thirds had English as an additional language and nearly three-quarters were from minority ethnic backgrounds.
76. Of the 37 pupils who achieved level 7, three-quarters were English as first language users and a third came from ethnic minority backgrounds. Again, numbers are relatively small but represented the diversity of ethnic heritage. By the end of Year 9 it would seem that first language English speakers are doing better.
77. At GCSE this pattern changes. Only 12 boys achieved fewer than predicted GCSE points. Of these only a third were from ethnic minority backgrounds. Of the 73 boys who achieved more points than predicted, well over half were from ethnic minority heritage. Currently, bilingual pupils achieve as well as their peers.
78. The school is aware of the changing nature of its intake and the possible language needs of some pupils. A teacher employed for half of the week works with the new intake to determine language needs and provides support in a rolling programme in some departments.
79. The inspection team was asked to be alert to the factors that may impede the progress of intelligent bilingual learners, such as familiarity with, for example, idiomatic English, use of metaphor, choice of vocabulary, poetic or technical language, or work, which required awareness of an implicit cultural context. No real examples were found. Good practice was evidenced in one history lesson in which the teacher anticipated that the group might not appreciate the term 'opposition' in an examination question and ensured that the entire group fully appreciated the nuance of the term within the examination context. Some pupils' writing contains basic inaccuracies in spelling, punctuation and the use of grammar, and marking did not always pick up on language use, such as correct tense, preposition and article usage. Some of these errors might be attributed to second language but could also be the result of less skilful proof reading.
80. The staff has received training on the needs of learners of English as an additional language. Good practice, for example, group discussion, allowing time for pupils to rehearse their ideas with peers, and the display of technical terms, was evident in a number of, but not all departments.

81. The school is monitoring attainment by ethnicity effectively at senior management level. This needs to be extended within departments as part of the raising awareness of a potential rather than actual need. It is, of course, far more difficult at departmental level because of the sometimes very small numbers of pupils. However, the analysis of the Year 9 English National Curriculum test results is particularly informative.

### **THE LANGUAGE PROVISION IN THE SCHOOL**

82. The school provides courses in French, German, Spanish and Latin. All pupils take one language at GCSE and all pupils take a second language in Years 7 to 9 with opportunities to take a second language at GCSE, although the number of students taking a second language at GCSE is low. The overall provision for modern foreign languages and for Latin is very good, principally because of the high quality of teaching and expertise of the staff, which ensures that the work is both challenging and stimulating and that pupils and students attain high standards.
83. Fuller details concerning the provision are included in the subject reports for the main school and post-16 provision. Latin is included in the languages section of the main school and, as the course at post-16 is titled classical studies, it is included within the humanities section.

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

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

#### English

Provision for English is excellent<sup>8</sup>

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils reach high standards in the National Curriculum tests and the GCSE examinations.
  - Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning in the subject are excellent.
  - The quality of teaching and learning is very good.
  - Marking and formal assessment are constructive and contribute to pupils improving their work.
  - The leadership and management of the department are outstanding. Leadership provides a clear vision and strong management contributes to the team using their love for the subject, their expertise and dedication to sustaining and developing standards.
84. Standards are high, overall. Results in the National Curriculum tests for 14-year-olds in 2002 exceeded the national average and the average for similar schools. Over a period of five years, either eight or nine out of every ten pupils have consistently gained the highest levels. The 2003 results mirrored the previous year's. The results, when compared with pupils' prior attainment in Year 6, represent good achievement. A significant number of pupils enter Year 7 with relatively low verbal skills and lower scores in writing. The test results at the end of Year 9 confirm that most pupils move up between one to three levels. The GCSE results are consistently high and, in 2003, the proportion of pupils obtaining the top grades in English and English literature exceeded the previous year's results. All pupils obtained a high grade in both subjects. The results in 2002 were well above average, with four boys receiving the prestigious accolade of being ranked in the top five in the country. When compared with other subjects, the performance of boys was slightly lower; however, achievement when compared with pupils' prior attainment from Year 6 through Year 11 is good, with most exceeding their expected grades by gaining the top grades, A\* or A.
85. Standards in lessons, folders and books are well above average and achievement is good overall. Pupils are articulate and are never at a loss for words. They use a wide vocabulary and their very good oral skills contribute to their understanding of the subject as they use thinking and learning skills to give perceptive answers. Boys make presentations confidently, use debating skills, and speak at length when contributing or asking questions to clarify points. In relation to their reading, boys analyse a wide range of genre, whether fiction or non-fiction competently. From the start of Year 7, skills of research, note-taking and analysis are well taught and, as a result, boys demonstrate a very good grasp of texts and can convey their response in detail with well-selected quotations and analytical explanation on the writer's use of language. By the end of Year 9, the highest attaining pupils discuss a complex range of literary texts normally reserved for more advanced studies.
86. Whilst relatively lower-attaining pupils, of which there is a small number, can discuss texts, they are not consistent in maintaining an in-depth analysis to merit the higher test levels or GCSE grades. By Year 11, analysis is very detailed and perceptive as most pupils hone in on a writer's techniques and purpose. Wide reading assignments are often original, with pupils

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<sup>8</sup> This judgement is a summative judgement made on the quality and range of curriculum provided within the subject: the way the subject is organised, the quality of teaching and learning, the achievement of pupils and the resource provision. These judgements are specific to the subject. Whilst it is appropriate to use this judgement to compare the provision for a specific subject between different schools, it is inappropriate to use this judgement to make relative comparisons between subjects within the same school because like is not being compared with like.

analysing complex matters competently regardless of the literary period or style. Pupils have very good background information on the historical and cultural setting of texts when analysing a writer's approach to particular themes; for example, Wright's *Black Boy* and Bronte's *Jane Eyre* or comparing Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* with Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. They are secure when exploring texts and considering the use of language, themes and characters. Pupils' attainment in writing is above average. They structure their work effectively and use a coherent and cohesive style to write with flair and creativity. However, a small number of lower-attaining pupils in all year groups are careless and will adopt a slapdash approach when editing their work. As a result, there are technical mistakes, and lack of attention to detail, which prevents them from achieving the top grades.

87. The quality of teaching is very good. Throughout the observations, teachers had only seen their classes on either two three occasions prior to the observation and were still getting to know their pupils. Teaching was consistently good; however, from the lesson observations and quality of work in pupils' books and folders, teaching is very good over time. Teachers love their subject and are very knowledgeable. They use their expertise to stretch pupils and the strong emphasis on using talk to approach learning is a key feature in every lesson. As a result, boys thrive on this because the questioning techniques of using well-targeted questions to provoke a response encourage them to become independent and divergent thinkers. They are encouraged to express and defend their viewpoints and this approach holds the attention of boys who find that they can interject, speak at length, exchange viewpoints and gain a deeper understanding of the subject. Teachers, therefore, use paired, group, whole-class discussion and feedback in a balanced way so that all pupils can display their initiative and prowess when speaking and listening. Teachers constantly challenge pupils to aim for the highest grades or levels and therefore use the assessment objectives as a prelude to setting tasks. Objectives are therefore explicit, and lessons often end with a summary of what they have achieved. There is emphasis on developing boys' vocabulary and it is not unusual for teachers to deliberate the root of words with pupils and spend time explaining and sharing responses. There is an impressive flow of information. Expectations are therefore demanding, often beyond that normally set for the age groups, with the use of well-selected resources to reinforce learning. This leads to boys rising to the challenge, fired by their personal ambition and knowing that they can achieve the set target.
88. Teachers are committed to their pupils and provide support for them during and after lessons. There are occasions when boys of Asian descent are not as confident in making presentations as their peers. Marking is constructive and provides pupils with guidance for improving their work. There is good emphasis on maintaining reading records and self-evaluation sheet, which give teachers an overview of pupils' progress.
89. The quality of learning reflects the teaching. Pupils are very keen to learn and receive support from their teachers to develop their understanding and knowledge of the world. They are, therefore, enthusiastic to discuss and explore their own and others' ideas and experiences. They listen very carefully to exchanges, picking up and developing ideas while teachers summarise and edit views. In this way, they acquire skills of analysis and debating as they seek to develop original thoughts based on their teachers drumming into them the importance of personal response instead of accepting their view as 'the right view'. Boys accept the culture of high expectation and work hard in and out of lessons.
90. The leadership of the department is outstanding. The department runs efficiently on a day-to-day basis. The development plan is precise and identifies the most pressing priorities and approaches to raising standards further. The team is in no doubt about requirements because there is a substantial handbook with clear systems and strategies for supporting gifted and talented pupils, those with English as an additional language as well as those who are likely to underachieve. There is a high level of accountability to the leadership group and pupils. The head of department constantly produces thorough reviews and analyses of the department's work and assessment data, with action points to sustain and raise standards further. The curriculum has been reviewed to reflect the Key Stage 3 Strategy.

91. The 1998 inspection noted areas for improvement in writing among a minority of pupils. This is still the case because they are careless when editing their work. Concentration in lessons has improved significantly. Pupils are very focused. The number of pupils achieving the top-most grades improves year on year and, in 2003, over 70 per cent obtained GCSE grades A\*/A in English and over 50 per cent in English literature. Results are high for grammar schools nationally. Opportunities for pupils to think about their work are a key feature of lessons, with pupils receiving feedback and taking responsibility for their learning. Although the department has taken action to introduce more texts from other literary heritages, there is still scope for widening reading lists for boys. The English department is a strength of the school.

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

92. Standards in literacy are well above those expected nationally. Attainment in speaking and listening is high. Pupils are articulate and take part in high-level debate conducted in many subjects. Discussion provides them with intellectual stimulation and contributes to them becoming thinkers for whom ideas are important. This is very evident in, for example, English, religious education and history lessons. There are, however, missed opportunities to develop boys' communication skills in some curriculum areas such as maths and science. Standards in reading are very good and the school uses a range of approaches to develop reading. For instance, the English department provides boys with recommended reading lists; the librarian promotes reading through activities such as a reading club, poetry day and boys shadowing the Carnegie prize. The school also invites well-known authors to work with boys.
93. Boys' analytical and textual grasp and understanding is very good. They use very good research skills to gather informative notes from a range of sources for their work. In Latin, dictionary work is stressed to demonstrate the root of words. Not all departments display key vocabulary or consistently ensure that all pupils understand the correct meaning of technical vocabulary. There is not yet a full awareness that boys for whom English is an additional language and with a different culture, might not be familiar with or understand the nuances of some words. The quality of writing is above average and is a strength. The highest attaining pupils write with precision and flair. There is, however, a small but significant number of boys who do not take enough care with editing and proof-reading their work, which contains basic inaccuracies in spelling, punctuation and the use of grammar. Presentation is of a high standard in most subjects, though in design and technology the younger boys in Year 7 do not always produce neat handwriting. The library is very well organised and, although the number of books is below that recommended for the size of the school, there is a good selection of texts, representative of different boys' interests and literary heritage. The library provides a very valuable service for all year groups and the selection of academic texts, journals and reference books support boys' learning.

### **Modern foreign languages**

The provision in modern foreign languages is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The high quality teaching which ensures that pupils are challenged, stimulated and enthusiastic and attain high standards.
- The hard-working ethos, which is created within the department.
- Very effective marking of pupils' work.
- The range of extra-curricular activities provided.
- Second modern language for all in Years 7 to 9 and the possibility of two languages at GCSE.
- Further extending and sharing good practice which has begun to develop in ICT.

94. Standards in languages for pupils in Years 7 to 9 are very good. Teacher-assessed results in modern languages are considerably above national figures and the trend has risen steadily over the last three years. The number of pupils attaining the highest levels has also considerably exceeded national figures. Standards in languages in Years 10 and 11 are also very good. The GCSE results for French, German and Spanish over the past 3 years have been well above national figures. Overall, pupils achieved better in languages than in their other subjects in 2002. The number of pupils gaining A\* and A grades in 2002 exceeded those for other selective schools nationally, particularly in French. The uptake of a language in Year 10 is considerably above national figures, although uptake of a second foreign language in Year 10 is low. Results have improved in all three languages since the last inspection.
95. Teaching and learning are very good. Teaching is stimulating, enthusiastic and consistently challenging, stemming from expert knowledge of the curriculum, how to teach it and how pupils learn. The vast majority of pupils progress well in relation to their capability, due to the challenging nature of the work offered. There are excellent relationships in the classroom and pupils are highly motivated and diligent, displaying positive attitudes to learning and responsibility taken for their own work and progress. They participate willingly in class. Homework is used effectively to reinforce and extend learning; for example, some very good use had been made of ICT resources to create PowerPoint presentations in German from pupils' research into a town or region. The use of ICT could be extended across the department. Helpful comments on marked work, with pointers for future improvement, aid pupils in evaluating work done. Teachers are skilled in getting pupils to work things out for themselves, thereby creating a depth of understanding and ensuring that pupils achieve well. Good attention is paid to structures of the language that help pupils create accurate sentences. For example, a Year 10 French class was able to switch between present, past and future tenses at will when interviewing one another.
96. There is good leadership in this hard-working department, with a drive for improvement and sense of direction. The addition of a second foreign language to the studies of all pupils in Years 8 and 9 is a valuable and significant feature of the school. The many extra-curricular opportunities provided enhance and extend the curriculum. The trips offered to France, Germany and Spain are very popular.
97. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Standards have risen. Standards in speaking and writing have improved. Documentation has improved. Leadership is effective. Progress has been made in the development of ICT and this is ongoing. However, take-up of the second modern foreign language is still low in Year 10.

## Latin

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils progress well and many achieve very good standards whilst developing a broad understanding of classical times as well as expertise in Latin.
  - The teacher has very good knowledge of his pupils, an excellent grasp of the subject and takes great care over his pronunciation of Latin, providing an excellent model for pupils.
  - The course followed and the good extra-curricular programme provides much variety and interest.
  - Pupils get too little opportunity to speak or read Latin aloud during lessons.
  - There is little use of visual display to stimulate interest in the subject.
98. The standards attained by Year 8 pupils are good, and Year 11 pupils reach a very good standard. Younger pupils have a good knowledge of Greek and Roman mythology as well as of life in classical times. GCSE pupils have good strategies for translating Latin, as well as a growing awareness of literary devices. Results in GCSE are above average, with 75 per cent of pupils attaining an A or an A\* grade. This shows a significant improvement since last year.



Since the last inspection standards have risen in Year 11. There is no significant difference in the attainment of different ethnic groups.

99. Pupils make good progress in Latin and each year group has a stimulating range of material to study. Pupils who opt for Latin make rapid progress in Year 8 and, by the beginning of Year 9, have a competent grasp of many of the grammatical features - e.g., the endings of the various noun declensions and how they are used. The teaching for GCSE moves pupils on to an appreciation of the literary values of Roman authors and more able pupils are able to identify features that Latin authors use to heighten poetic and other effects. Pupils like Latin, and in Year 8 about one in five choose it as one of their options. The GCSE courses consistently attract a worthwhile number of pupils.
100. Pupils are responsive in lessons and enjoy the work set for them. They work in a purposeful manner and listen attentively. Teaching was very good or good in all of the lessons seen. The teacher has an outstanding grasp of the subject matter and an obvious enthusiasm that stimulates pupils. Particularly impressive is the way that he continually draws attention to the way that Latin has formed so much of the roots of English. No student's contribution is undervalued, and this led the teacher to look up 'genuine' in the dictionary, and found - unlikely as it may seem - that the pupil's suggestion of this as a word derived from the Latin word 'genu' (a knee) was correct.
101. The teacher takes great care about his pronunciation of Latin and this provides an excellent model for pupils. However, pupils have too few opportunities to speak Latin in class and this is an area that needs development. Lessons are planned well and the teacher has high expectations of all pupils. Questioning is used well and there is always an element of challenge in lessons, which ensures that pupils are working at full stretch. Written work is set regularly and marked in a way that affirms achievement and is helpful for further progress.
102. The strong place that this subject holds in the school reflects the breadth and balance of the curriculum. The subject matter, of both the Latin and classics courses, is aimed at giving a rounded picture of the classical world. The teacher uses videos in his teaching to broaden pupils' knowledge of Roman and Greek life. However, the displays in the classroom are minimal and there is little visual material to stimulate the interest of pupils. Teaching emphasises links with English and other modern languages, as well as other cross-cultural links. Extra-curricular visits and activities are very good. There are trips abroad and within Britain (e.g., to Hadrian's Wall) as well as to local places of classical interest. These both raise awareness of the subject and enrich the curriculum. The head of department manages the subject well and the scheme of work is now fuller than at the time of the last inspection. The teaching of the subject reflects the aims of the school, as well as contributing effectively to the social, moral and cultural development of pupils.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision for mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are high when compared with national expectations.
- Pupils achieve well over their time in the school.
- Teaching is good, overall, but some lessons lack sufficient variety in the activities for learning, particularly in younger year groups. Teachers are committed to helping their pupils to do well and relationships are very good.

- Marking and informal assessment, although satisfactory, lack consistency across the department.
  - The leadership and management of the department are good and this has sustained the high standards achieved.
103. Standards in mathematics are high in relation to national expectations, and among the highest in the school. Pupils' attainment in mathematics when they enter the school is well above average. Results in the national tests taken at the end of year 9 have been consistently very high over a number of years, and remained so in 2003, with over nine out of ten pupils reaching the highest levels, seven and eight. For both cohorts, the pupils' rate of progress was above that nationally for those with a similar starting point at the end of Year 6. Standards in the GCSE examinations in 2002 were well above average. Similarly, in 2003, every student achieved a higher grade of A\* to C, and four in every five pupils obtained the A\* or A grades. Pupils from each of the school's wide range of ethnic groups were very successful in both the national tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE mathematics examinations.
104. Inspection evidence indicates that standards achieved in lessons by the end of Year 9 are well above average and similar to that recorded in the national tests. Achievement in lessons was generally at least in line with expectations at this early stage of the year, and the work in the pupils' books reflects a consistently fast rate of progress across all the expected areas of mathematics. Pupils have very good numerical skills when they enter the school, as seen in a Year 7 lesson where pupils performed operations with fractions and mixed numbers very competently. Such skills are sustained and developed well into good manipulative algebra skills, alongside work on shape and space and data-handling. Pupils learn to use and apply their mathematics in a range of problem-solving activities and investigational tasks. However, although all pupils achieve well, a significant minority of pupils is careless in the presentation of their work, particularly diagrams, and not all pupils are always able to access written questions involving more difficult vocabulary. Generally, pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 can readily spot patterns but are sometimes less confident in breaking a task down into simpler tasks, as in a Year 8 lesson applying Pythagoras' theorem to practical problems.
105. By the end of Year 11, pupils achieve well, overall, with the majority of pupils making at least the expected progress from Year 9. The content of work in lessons provides the challenge appropriate for able pupils. There is a particularly strong emphasis on stretching mathematically gifted pupils and on preparing them for the further study of mathematics. Generally, in lessons, pupils approach tasks very systematically, have a good understanding of the importance of proof, for example, as in a lesson on circle theorems and display exceptionally strong algebraic and numerical skills, beyond that expected for their age group. They have a very good recall of earlier material. However, some pupils' interpretative skills are underdeveloped as indicated by their GCSE data-handling projects.
106. The quality of teaching in mathematics is good, overall, though there are still inconsistencies in the quality of teaching within the department. Relationships are very good and all teachers are committed to helping pupils achieve of their best. There is a collaborative approach to learning, with all teachers displaying a very good command of mathematics. Most are able to inspire pupils to enjoy its patterns and to apply their knowledge to non-standard questions.
107. Pupils learn well because of the consistency of the day-to-day good teaching, particularly in classes following GCSE courses. Although the best lessons are carefully structured conceptually, and questioning is well-focused to develop pupils' mathematical reasoning, not all teachers, particularly with younger year groups, provide a sufficiently differentiated range of activities for pupils. The planning of lessons in the early years is not yet fully enriched by the Framework for Mathematics. There is a strong, and albeit successful, emphasis on textbooks and written work, but there are missed opportunities to develop the pupils' communication and language skills in mathematics. In a few lessons, there is little consideration given to assessing accurately what pupils have learned as a result of teaching. In these lessons, too great a focus on individuals results in pupils waiting too long for help, or engaging in off-task

activities. Nevertheless, most pupils are very well-motivated, actively engage in lessons and persevere with challenging work. The combination of the pupils' high motivation, combined with the commitment of the mathematics team, is a strong contributory factor to the pupils' success in mathematics.

108. The use of day-to-day assessment in mathematics is satisfactory, overall, but includes aspects that require improvement. All teachers set homework frequently and regularly. Most pupils receive helpful and immediate oral feedback on their work in lessons and there are examples of good quality diagnostic marking that enable pupils to improve their work. However, there is some marking that is cursory and too infrequent. Some teachers fail to check individual pupils' progress at intervals in lessons, and miss opportunities for correcting errors at an early stage. There are inconsistencies in the usefulness of information that teachers record on pupils' understanding and progress and this affects negatively the transition of classes between teachers.
109. The leadership of mathematics is good and is a strength of the provision for mathematics. The head of department has a clear vision for its development and has encouraged a committed team approach. He has sensibly prioritised future developments in what is already a successful area of the curriculum, and has a strong focus on maintaining the current high standards.
110. The department is well managed. The head of department is aware, for example, of the need to use data more fully to track the pupils' development in mathematics and has introduced a pupil-profiling system over the last two years. He has fostered an enhanced interest in using ICT to enrich the teaching of mathematics and is setting up opportunities for further staff training. The monitoring and evaluation of the work of the department is systematic and there is good attention to the induction and support of new teachers and trainees.
111. Since the last inspection, progress within the mathematics department has been good. Not only have high standards been maintained but also pupils' examination results are even higher. Monitoring and evaluation of the department's work has strengthened, and there is a greater awareness of the importance of enriching the pupils' classroom experience through, for example, the use of ICT. However, there is still a need to disseminate even further departmental good practice in teaching styles that support learning and understanding for all pupils, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

112. Although, as yet, there is little planned and co-ordinated use of, or enhancement of, mathematics across the school curriculum there is good provision within mathematics to develop pupils' numeracy skills, with the result that pupils use their high level skills very effectively across other curriculum areas both in the main school and in the course of their AS-level and A2-level studies. Pupils' mathematical competence, for example, supports work in science and geography particularly well. In GCSE science, for example, ease of calculation assists the pupils' understanding of genetics and kinematics. In geography, higher order data-handling skills are both taught and used. In earlier years, in music, younger pupils are shown how to appreciate the link between patterns in music and patterns in mathematics. In design and technology, however, some pupils display careless graphic skills, a feature reflected in the work of a small number of mathematics pupils.
113. Recent staff development activities, well received by teachers, have highlighted the relevance of cross-curricular aspects of numeracy.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment throughout the school are high.
  - The teaching of biology, chemistry and physics is competent and challenging.
  - The attitudes and study skills of pupils are excellent.
  - The provision of science in the lower school has been unsatisfactory but is currently being developed.
  - There is the need for a permanent head of science to lead and manage a more co-ordinated approach to common aspects, such as assessment, across the biology, chemistry and physics departments.
  - The school is applying for specialist science status.
114. Standards in science are high throughout the school. By the end of Year 9, compared with all schools nationally, results are very high. In 2003, results were also high compared with other selective schools, with over two-thirds of boys getting a level 7 in science. This was a significant improvement on 2002 when, although standards were high, pupils made far less progress than expected as measured against their prior attainment when they joined the school. The school picked this up and changes were made, resulting in the significantly improved results in 2003.
115. From the beginning of Year 9, and up to GCSE, all boys study biology, chemistry and physics as separate subjects. They make good or very good progress and examination results reflect this. In 2003, the best results to date, about half the pupils got A/A\* grade in all three sciences. However, a small percentage did not gain an A-C grade, which was also the case in 2002. The GCSE physics results in recent years have been higher than the others. Chemistry results improved in 2003, so that standards across the sciences are now more consistent and significantly higher than for all other schools.
116. Pupils have an exemplary attitude to science. Most show an intrinsic interest in the subject and younger pupils particularly are intrigued and fascinated by scientific phenomena. All are willing to contribute their own considerable knowledge and ideas, and they are keen to research and produce imaginative work at home. This is reflected in the range of motivating homework tasks, including the use of ICT, which extend and develop class work or which prepare pupils for the next lesson. The boys are serious and active listeners, both with their teachers and with one another. They sustain their concentration and involvement in lessons for long periods, benefiting from the expertise and experience of teachers. These factors contribute significantly to the high standards achieved.
117. In Years 7 and 8, pupils follow an integrated science course taught by one teacher. The first unit introduces pupils to laboratory equipment, scientific skills and procedures and it prepares them for experimental and investigative work later. A co-ordinator for lower school science has recently been appointed to develop the course into a more rigorous and engaging programme of work and to ensure smooth continuity and planned progression from primary science to the more detailed specialist work later.
118. By the end of Year 9, most pupils are very good at keeping neat and accurate records of their work and they are especially skilful and confident in processing numerical data, plotting graphs and analysing their results. They have a wide technical vocabulary, can explain their ideas fluently and handle difficult concepts such as atomic structure. They are supported to develop high order thinking skills and pupils are able to predict outcomes of investigations, evaluate practical procedures and apply knowledge to new contexts.

119. Currently, pupils are placed into ability groups in Years 10 and 11 for their GCSE biology, chemistry and physics courses based on their Year 9 National Curriculum test result. The setting arrangements work well for the upper- and middle-attaining groups but there are issues with regard to the lower attaining pupils that need to be monitored. GCSE units develop work introduced lower down the school. For example, in one lesson, pupils were guided through a series of whole-class and paired activities to use their knowledge of atomic structure to work out the principles of radioactivity.
120. Teaching is generally good across the school, with the best practice seen in GCSE and A-level classes. Teachers have excellent specialist knowledge and most use fascinating facts and relevant examples, for example, mobile phones, to make science come alive. Pupils are expected to go above and beyond what is required at a particular level and they respond well to this challenge. Most lessons are well planned and varied and they are delivered at a crisp pace to keep pupils on task. In the best lessons, learning outcomes are made explicit at the beginning and time is spent at the end to summarise what has been achieved. Pupils come to lessons with impressive levels of knowledge and understanding either from previous work in the school or from personal study. Teachers do not always fully acknowledge this and they need to be more strategic to build on prior learning. At times, teachers talk for too long and questions are not directed evenly around the class to involve all pupils in discussion. Books are marked regularly using the agreed school system but pupils would benefit from more detailed feedback on what they have done well and, importantly, on how they might improve their work further.
121. The three teachers working as heads of biology, chemistry and physics provide good role models for their staff teams, including the very competent technical support staff. They lead their sections with obvious commitment to excellence. However, there are missed opportunities to share good practice and to spread the load of development work across the wider science team. In addition, assessment data, both within and across subject areas, are not collated and analysed well. This omission prevents an evaluation of the effectiveness of current science provision and a properly informed approach to future planning. There is a need for a permanent head of science to provide vision and direction for the ongoing development of good science education within the school.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strength and weaknesses**

- Standards in ICT throughout the school enable pupils to use it independently to support their learning.
  - The subject knowledge and teaching of specialists within the department provides a course in which all pupils make good progress.
  - The school's strategy planning that has already improved teacher training, accommodation and equipment since the last inspection.
  - The use of ICT by other subjects is limited by the need for accommodation and specialist equipment.
  - The subject knowledge of some teachers leads to insufficient focus on reasoning in the lower school.
122. Standards at the end of Year 11 are high, with all pupils taking the full course gaining a higher grade at GCSE in 2002. This is consistent with the high standard of coursework seen during the inspection, in which boys' organisation, expression and application of IT to problems is relevant and accurate. Many pupils work well above the required level for top grades at GCSE. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection.

123. Pupils beginning GCSE courses during Year 9 have already, by the end of the year, written coursework that will achieve higher grades at GCSE. Their work shows very good, detailed knowledge of the ways in which presentation, research and data-handling software can be applied to processes within organisations. This is a strong improvement over the standard of work in Years 7 and 8, where the emphasis in the past has been on learning simple processes, rather than thinking about the application of software to particular problems. For example, classes seen during the inspection were learning to write and replicate simple formulae in a spreadsheet, but by the end of Year 9 they could identify issues causing problems in a system, then use spreadsheets to solve them. The new head of department provides guidance to help colleagues develop pupils' reasoning in the lower school. Specialist teachers with very good subject knowledge challenge pupils to develop their understanding by thinking logically when working out answers, and to explain their reasoning clearly. Teachers constantly assess student's progress and respond to the gaps in their knowledge as well as pushing them to improve on their strengths. Pupils' achievement, overall, by the end of Year 9 is therefore very good, with good achievement continuing to the end of Year 11.
124. This strong improvement over the situation at the time of the last inspection arises out of good leadership by the senior management, who have acted to improve both staffing and resources for information technology. All pupils now have a weekly lesson, with sole access to a computer in a reliable network so that the pace of lessons is brisk and efficient. Although there was some disruption in the past because of staffing difficulties, the department is now strong. The new co-ordinator has a clear vision for improvement and is working well with colleagues to improve the course.
125. Improvement since the last inspection is, therefore, good in terms of very high standards, teaching, curriculum coverage and use of ICT throughout the school.

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

126. The use of ICT in other subjects is more widespread than at the last inspection, but, until this year, teachers in most areas have had very limited opportunities to take classes into computer rooms. One room is now available. Teachers throughout the school are trained in the use of ICT. They encourage pupils to use ICT independently. Science, English and design technology contribute to the now complete coverage of the IT National Curriculum, and the music department makes good use of limited equipment.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good leadership has brought rapid improvement in provision and standards.
  - Schemes of work provide a wide variety of teaching and learning styles, which stimulate pupils.
  - Very good teaching in Key Stage 4 has increased pupils' attainment at GCSE, especially the number of pupils gaining the highest grades.
127. Achievement is very good in both the lower and upper school. At the end of Year 9 standards are well above the national average for all schools and in line with standards in selective schools. The results at GCSE in 2003 showed a marked improvement on results in earlier years, which, although above the national average, were below expectations for pupils in selective schools. There was an especially marked increase in the number of pupils attaining the highest grades; in 2003 over sixty per cent of pupils attained grades A\* or A as a result of very good teaching that challenged and extended them. There are no apparent differences in

the achievement of different groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language.

128. The quality of teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Lesson planning is very thorough, incorporating starter activities that stimulate pupils' interest and plenary sessions in which pupils are encouraged to evaluate what they have learnt. Marking is also very helpful and shows pupils how to make further progress. Pupils now benefit from a wide variety of different activities in lessons, including work in small groups, which produces high levels of discussion. The resources used raise pupils' interest; for example, in Year 7, aerial photographs of the local area are used to teach skills of analysis, and pupils collect data from gravestones in order to assess the effect of weathering on different types of rock.
129. The leadership of the subject is now very good. There had been considerable instability in the leadership of geography before the present head of department joined the school in September 2002. She has brought energy and vision to the post and has transformed the department in her first year. Thorough evaluation of needs enabled clear priorities to be set, focusing on teaching and learning issues, so that new schemes of work have resulted in a broadening of strategies. Good practice is now shared with the other geography teacher who is putting the initiatives into effect with enthusiasm. Consequently, there has been an improvement in provision and in pupils' attainment. Assessment practice is developing well; assessments are being rewritten and evaluated along with the new schemes of work. Organisation is good, but the pupils' records that exist are inadequate for monitoring a pupil's progress through the school. A system to allow this is now being put into place as part of the subject's development plan.
130. Geography lessons are planned to include strategies for developing the level of pupils' literacy skills. Teachers make opportunities for pupils to talk and listen with others. For example, in a Year 9 lesson pupils were asked to analyse a photograph of a refugee camp and express their feelings in the context of global inequalities. This was also an example of the way in which the subject makes a significant contribution both to pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural and citizenship development. The use of ICT in lessons has increased and there is now very good provision for fieldwork in each year; both of these were major shortcomings at the time of the previous inspection. Geography uses the pupils' highly developed numeracy skills effectively.
131. Since the previous inspection, when considerable underachievement was noted, there has been very good improvement in the quality of teaching and learning and in the standards that pupils achieve. Much of this has taken place in the past year, due to the very good improvement in the quality of leadership.

## History

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The high levels of attainment at GCSE.
  - The very good standards achieved by pupils at all stages of learning.
  - The very good quality of teaching and learning, which is based on high expectations of pupil achievement.
  - Teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and of the requirements of the courses they teach.
  - The quality of critical and higher order thinking skills, which are engendered in pupils.
  - Improve assessment policies to help pupils gain a clear view of their standards and what they need to do in order to improve.
132. The 2003 Teacher Assessments show overall standards of attainment at the end of Year 9 to be well above average. In 2003, GCSE results were significantly above the national average

for all maintained schools. Ninety-four per cent of pupils achieved grades A\* to B, and 68 per cent gained grades A\* or A. These results continued the marked upward trend since the last inspection and were amongst the strongest in the school.

133. Inspection evidence shows that, at the end of Year 9, standards are well above nationally expected levels, and pupils are achieving well in terms of their ability and attainment levels on entry. Overall, pupils show very good knowledge and understanding of the historical events and personalities they are studying. They recognise that history is based on evidence, and have a clear understanding of the meaning of bias and prejudice. Overall, pupils have very good oral, listening and writing skills. They write at length in response to the increasingly sophisticated questions presented by their teachers, and demonstrate confidence in handling and interpreting a wide range of historical sources. They show a good sense of chronology and can use historical terms appropriately. Standards of presentation are also very high.
134. At the end of Year 11, overall attainment is well above nationally expected levels. Pupils' historical knowledge and understanding has deepened. They are more assured when organising and using historical facts in writing and discussion, and when analysing historical data. Pupils are able to construct well-substantiated arguments and to challenge different historical interpretations. Overall, they are well versed in the historical skills required to achieve the highest possible examination grades. The sense of security and confidence generated in the subject is reflected in the numbers of pupils opting to take history at GCSE. All pupils are responsive to the directions of their teachers and are keen to take responsibility in pursuing independent lines of historical enquiry.
135. Pupils join the school with above average levels of attainment, but only limited skills in history. Overall, they make good progress in the subject due to the highly focused teaching of basic historical and study skills, and the high aspirations of their teachers. In general, pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language make at least the same progress as their peers. It is to the credit of the department that they were amongst the first in the school to see the changing English language needs of a growing proportion of the pupil body and to modify teaching and learning styles to accommodate and support these pupils.
136. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. Challenging lessons lead to clear gains in learning. Knowledge and understanding are systematically consolidated and extended. Lessons are well paced and structured, and incorporate successfully a diversity of learning strategies, styles and activities that promote very high expectations of achievement. Teachers possess excellent levels of subject knowledge, and exposition is both clear and intellectually stimulating. Through full and colourful presentations, which often tend to the original, teachers inspire high levels of interest in the subject and succeed in developing higher order thinking and critical skills. In lessons, pupils show enthusiasm in articulating their knowledge and in sharing different ideas and viewpoints. Very secure relationships, which are engendered in an atmosphere of mutual trust, contribute to very good behavioural standards. Pupils respect their teachers and concentrate hard in lessons. They are diligent in their approach and eager to advance their learning. They respond particularly well to research assignments, showing a very good capacity for independent work.
137. The head of department has a strong sense of purpose and clear objectives for the department. Levels of co-operation are good as teachers work collaboratively and share their enthusiasms. Good quality resources, including an extensive range of videos, are used to stimulate interest and help understanding. Appropriate schemes of work are in place and planned improvements, such as the introduction of a course in Asian history in Year 8, show a readiness to innovate in response to a changing school population.



138. Regular homework is used to reinforce learning in lessons, but certain opportunities are lost to enhance pupil attainment in routine marking as the feedback given to pupils often lacks depth. Greater transparency of assessment policies in Years 7 and 8, the consistent application of self-assessment reviews and target-setting would help all pupils to gain a clearer view of their own standards and the action required to improve their performance. Teachers are very well informed about external examination assessment criteria, which they pass on most effectively to pupils. Excellent use is made of performance data and examination results to inform future planning.
139. External visits are organised annually for certain classes in order to enhance the curriculum. However, there is scope for this programme to be extended and for enrichment activities in general to contribute further to pupil learning in history. As yet, the subject has provided few opportunities to develop ICT skills. This has been due to pressures on a limited number of school computers and the lack of dedicated workstations in the history teaching rooms. Pupils have access to a good range of history books in the school library. The department contributes well to moral, social and cultural education, in addition to the teaching of citizenship.
140. The standards of attainment at Key Stage 3 and GCSE, levels of progress and the quality of teaching and learning, show good improvement since the last inspection.

### **Religious education**

Overall, the quality of provision in Religious Education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Improved standards in all years, especially in Years 7 to 9.
  - Teaching is good and occasionally very good, enabling pupils to achieve well.
  - Pupil management is very good, contributing very well to a good climate for learning.
  - Contributions towards the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good providing many opportunities for pupils' personal development.
  - The setting of detailed targets, against which pupil progress can be identified, and sharing these with pupils.
  - The monitoring of teaching.
  - The allocation of time in Years 10 and 11.
141. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are well above expectations for 14-year-olds in relation to the Redbridge LEA Agreed syllabus. In Years 10 and 11, standards in the work seen are above the national average for all schools. The GCSE short course will be examined for the first time in 2004.
142. In lessons and work seen during the inspection, standards in Years 7 to 9 are well above expected levels. There are many very good examples of pupils developing their knowledge and understanding of religious language, principles and concepts. Pupils make sense of what they study and can relate it to their experiences of life. They were able to provide useful links with everyday experiences. Pupils with special educational needs make very good progress. The use of key words, technical language and good discussion work were useful aids to improve literacy and oral competency. In Years 10 and 11, standards are above national expectations. In Year 10, GCSE pupils achieve well. They have a deep respect for the views of others, and this enables all pupils to feel confident in expressing their views in an open and honest way. In Year 11, pupils demonstrate very good discussion skills and their ability to interpret and evaluate is well established. Teaching is always satisfactory, mostly good and in several lessons it was very good. Very good use of questioning consolidates current learning and enables review of previous work. Teachers use a suitable range of styles that enable pupils to *learn from* as well as *learn about* religion. As a consequence, pupils maintain their interest and develop understanding of religious principles and concepts. Homework is used to

good effect in allowing pupils to reflect on the information they have gained in class. Teachers have clear expectations of pupils and challenge them to succeed, and these are very effective in contributing to pupil achievement.

143. Assessment of pupils' work is generally unsatisfactory. The procedures do provide a sound basis for assessing what pupils know and understand. The subject does not set detailed targets against which it can assess pupils' progress. Consequently, pupils are unclear about the standards they are reaching and what they need to do to improve. Standards are being affected by the limited amount of time given to the subject in Years 10 and 11. This also prevents them from reflecting on their experiences and their ability to 'learn from' religion. Pupils in these years do not receive their full entitlement to experience a broad religious education.
144. Curriculum leadership is good, with a clear sense of purpose and direction. Pupils are provided with a rich diet of religious education, especially in Years 7 to 9. The head of the department approaches the task with enthusiasm and commitment. The monitoring of the work of teachers in the department is underdeveloped.
145. The subject makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. Pupils demonstrate a profound respect for the views, faiths and traditions of each other.
146. Overall, pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. They behave extremely well, are well motivated and apply themselves to the work. They collaborate very well with one another and work at a productive pace. The relationship between teachers and pupils is excellent, and teachers support individuals both academically and personally. Pupil behaviour makes a very good contribution to pupil achievement and progress.
147. Since the last inspection, standards in Years 7 to 9 have improved. Good improvements have been made in planning and in the schemes of work. The introduction of the GCSE short course has been an important feature. The hard work of the curriculum leader has achieved great credibility for the subject. Standards are above the national average in Years 10 and 11. Standards would be higher if more time was allocated to the subject. Overall, the improvements since the last inspection have had a good impact on standards, pupil achievement and progress.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

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

- Very good teaching and learning.
  - Very high standards achieved by pupils at GCSE.
  - Very high capacity for pupils to work independently and collaboratively.
  - Experienced, knowledgeable and talented teachers who enthuse pupils.
  - Resources for computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacture (CAD/CAM) are inadequate.
  - Written guidance for pupils on how to improve their work.
  - The breadth of the curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9.
148. Standards as judged by teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are well above the national average and standard of work seen in Years 7 to 9 reflects these judgements. Although pupils' presentation of work is low when they first enter the school, by the end of Year 9 the quality of

design briefs is high. In 2002 all pupils were entered for a short course GCSE in either graphics, resistant materials or electronics and all pupils gained a grades between A\*-C. In 2003, the 100 per cent results for electronics and graphics were maintained. However, results for resistant materials dipped, possibly because pupils rarely used computer-aided design or manufacture (CAD/CAM). For those pupils who chose an additional full course GCSE results were outstanding in electronics. In 2002, 100 per cent of candidates achieved either A\* or A grade and in 2003, 95 per cent of candidates gained A\* or A. In graphics, 100 per cent of pupils gained a grade A in 2002 and 100 per cent gained A\*-C in 2003. In resistant materials, 100 per cent gained grades A\*-C in both 2002 and 2003. These results stand favourable comparison with the results pupils gained in other subjects within the school.

149. All pupils achieve highly and progress at a very good rate. They make and sustain good gains in their learning. Teachers' expectations are high and the work is very demanding. Basic skills and processes are taught effectively and this contributes to pupils making very good progress. All pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and are keen to do well. Knowledgeable teachers, whose own enthusiasm for the subject is infectious, contribute to these positive attitudes. Higher-attaining pupils are set tasks, which fully challenge their abilities, and all pupils respond positively to the many opportunities to work both independently and collaboratively.
150. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 11 is very good. Pupils learn quickly, maintain their concentration well and have the determination to produce high quality design briefs and artefacts. Teachers' enthusiasm for and knowledge of their subjects is very high and pupils hang on to every word and absorb like sponges the knowledge teachers impart. This was very evident in a Year 7 lesson when the teacher went into considerable detail about the potential future developments for light-emitting diodes. Pupils' understanding of the work they are doing is very high. Year 8 pupils demonstrated a very good grasp of the design problems they would have to face when designing and making a robotic model to enter a pyramid to retrieve the 'Pharaoh's hidden treasure'. Pupils' work is assessed accurately and recorded on computer to enable pupils' progress to be monitored effectively. Teachers do give very good oral feedback as to how pupils can improve their work but opportunities are missed in that written marking of work rarely indicates how they might improve.
151. Leadership and management are good. Pupils are well served by a dedicated, enthusiastic and knowledgeable team of teachers and technicians. Resources are adequate, with the exception of outdated and inadequate CAD/CAM resources.
152. Good progress has been made since the last inspection. The use of ICT has improved. An effective computerised system for recording pupils' assessments has been introduced. Results continue to be high. The breadth of curriculum in Years 7 to 9 continues, as it has for the last two inspections, to have weaknesses as pupils do not have the opportunity to experience food or compliant materials as specified by the National Curriculum requirements for design and technology.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and Design**

Over the last year much work has been undertaken to improve the **unsatisfactory provision for art and design**. Provision in the sixth form is now good and it is satisfactory and improving in Years 10 and 11. It remains unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good leadership and the management of the department: a thorough audit has been undertaken and a clear plan of action has been drafted.
  - The priority for raising standards at GCSE and ensuring at least a good provision in the sixth form has been achieved.
  - There is a need to ensure that the quality of teaching and pupils' learning and progress is consistent across the department in Years 7 to 9.
153. The art department has not had a smooth history since the last inspection. Illness and an extended period of temporary and supply staff have meant that standards and pupils' attitudes to the subject declined.
154. When pupils join the school at age 11, their painting and drawing skills are weak and they have little knowledge or understanding about art or design. Thereafter, pupils become increasingly competent in using line, tone and colour and researching the work of artists. Printmaking and three-dimensional work are established. At age 14, pupils have a basic knowledge of the work of several artists and can use a range of media competently. Exploring and developing their own ideas, particularly in their sketch-books, is less well-developed. Standards in GCSE exams in 2003 show improvement - all pupils gained grades A\* to C. The average point score shows significant improvement from the previous year; well above the national average and closing on the average for selective schools. Standards being achieved by pupils in the current Year 11 indicate they are in the position to attain higher standards than previous years' GCSE results. They link their work meaningfully to artists' work, use the Internet well to find out and write well about artists and their work. Most use a wide range of techniques confidently and base their work on direct observation. Little evidence exists, however, of three-dimensional work, or the use of ICT to manipulate images or of other media, such as photography.
155. Assessment, though sound, overall, is inconsistent. Pupils receive good spoken feedback and, while in some classes the quality of written feedback is very good, in others it is insubstantial. The head of department is developing a portfolio of pupils' work illustrative of National Curriculum levels to ensure assessment is accurate across the department. Marking at GCSE is very exact, as indicated by the moderator's report. The art and design element of the school Intranet is excellent as it provides very good examples of pupils' work for pupils to see and has the potential to provide assignments for pupils to access.
156. Overall, given their starting point and the well-above-average standards in GCSE, pupils achieve well over time across the school, which reflects at least satisfactory and, often, very much better teaching. That said, there are indications that pupils do not always make consistently good progress in Years 7 to 9. In the sample of lessons seen, teaching was variable. Very good teaching, for example, was characterised by pupils' attention being secured from the beginning by providing them with reproductions of artists' work on the same theme. In one good lesson, for example, the teacher modelled an approach to drawing a shell from direct observation, showing pupils how to establish the overall shape first, consider the relationship of the image to the paper and to progressively refine the drawing. This was very effective because it showed pupils the stages through which they would need to go and the questions they would need to ask themselves. As a result, pupils' drawings were accurate, vigorous and well composed. By contrast, some unsatisfactory teaching was seen in the sample where pupils were not engaged fully and best use was not made of the time available. GCSE teaching is satisfactory in most respects, with teaching placing due emphasis on all of the key aspects of the subject but teaching is not always effective in maintaining all pupils' interest. Literacy is emphasised appropriately; pupils write at length about artists and their work and take notes during lessons and speak confidently about what they have learnt. The head of department in a joint planning exercise is developing new schemes of work to ensure that rigour and common approaches are developed across the department.

157. A new head of department has been appointed and been in post a year. He brings commitment and an enthusiastic approach and has improved the provision significantly. He is knowledgeable and shows good understanding of examination syllabus requirements and what needs to be done for pupils to attain high standards. A thorough audit has been undertaken, priorities established, and a clear plan of action has been drafted to address these. The head of department has ensured that the provision in the sixth form is good and that GCSE results are improving. Recruitment to the GCSE course has been falling in recent years and the urgent need to raise the profile of the subject has been recognised by addressing the key area of standards and by very effective display of pupils' and students' work around the school.

## Music

The provision for Music is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The head of department's excellent, inspiring teaching enables pupils to make exceptionally good progress.
- The very good leadership of the department goes some considerable way to compensate for the deficiencies of accommodation and resources which impose serious limitations on what can be achieved at the present time.
- There is too much variation in the quality of teaching across the department.
- Many boys are musically talented and enjoy music, 75 pupils and students take instrumental lessons.

158. Throughout the school, standards in music are high. On entry to the school pupils have had a mixed background in music; a few are already proficient on an instrument, others are starting from a low base. By the end of Year 8, however, all have acquired the essentials of musical language; they can read and write musical notation, they can play and sing simple two- and three-part pieces with accuracy, they can compose using a range of harmonies, instruments and musical styles and they can follow and discuss musical scores.

159. Public examination results have been very good for the past four years, with a large proportion of top grade passes. In 2003, 40 per cent of GCSE candidates obtained A\* passes. Over the past three years, more than half the GCSE grades awarded (26) have been A\* and A grades, a further 14 were at grade B, and the remaining six at grade C. These results compare well both with national averages and with the school's internal averages and projections. At this level, pupils are eager to analyse and talk about musical structures, using a rich range of musical vocabulary and concepts. They have begun to internalise their understanding of music, and can therefore begin to express what they know in their own musical performances. The department's teaching approach, in which theory and practice are closely and intriguingly interconnected, achieves outstanding results.

160. One example from a Year 11 lesson illustrates this. Pupils listened intently to Herbie Hancock's *Cantaloupe Island* before entering into lively discussion about its musical structure. As the teacher probed and challenged, firmly and with respectful encouragement, he illustrated the discussion with his own superb piano playing and with excerpts from other sound tracks. Pupils became more articulate, more animated in their responses, to the praise and further challenge of the teacher. Fifteen minutes later, they were all giving a polished performance of *Cantaloupe Island* as the teacher moved amongst them modelling and advising with effortless mastery of all the eight instruments involved. After more focus on the stylistic features of the Hancock original, further consideration of structure and modality enabled pupils to weave improvised solo passages into the music. To finish, pupils and teacher gave a first-rate performance, with improvisation, to the immense pleasure and satisfaction of all.

161. Performances observed during the inspection, in class, in practice sessions and on recordings, provided many examples of pupils playing a wide range of music with confidence, polish and real artistry.
162. Excellent teaching, over a period of years, has enabled pupils to reach these high performance levels. Relationships between teacher and pupils are exceptional: consistently high expectations and challenge, absolute refusal to accept second-best, conspicuous warmth, praise and reinforcement, frequent laughter and enjoyment and a strong and obvious sense of commitment to the musical well-being of each and every pupil. Superb musical skills and artistry, exemplary lesson planning and a tireless intellectual determination to exploit the learning possibilities in every interaction, create for pupils a fine learning opportunity. This is teaching at its best, a rich resource for the department and for the school to make full use of as an example of good practice.
163. This excellence pushes pupils to the limits of their capabilities. The teacher's brisk and animated introduction to a Year 8 lesson engaged pupils immediately with a discussion of layering on an ostinato figure played on the African *gankogui*. Discussion ranged across mathematical factors in rhythmic cycles, and the etymological derivation of musical words. Pupils' incorrect use of spoken English was corrected. Pupils moved rapidly on to practical work, speaking, clapping, stamping and drumming rhythm patterns, before performing three-part poly-rhythms with intense delight, accurately moderating tempo, dynamics and timbre under the direction of the master-drummer-teacher. In the plenary discussion, pupils spoke eloquently of the difficulties they had encountered and their solutions and strategies for improvement.
164. However, not all teaching in the department is of this calibre. Lessons were observed in which pupils did their best to make headway against teaching that lacked both confidence and finesse.
165. Since the inspection in 1998 the head of department has made very good progress in many respects. Detailed schemes of work have been written and revised in the past two years to take account of examination requirements. An effective assessment system has been designed and implemented for pupils in years 7 to 9. With a little support from the school, but largely through his own efforts, the head of department has raised money to obtain and upgrade a suite of computers with simple but highly effective software. Pupils make good use of these antiquated and fragile machines for their compositions. Singing has become part of normal life in music lessons as pupils consider and internalise their musical ideas. More ensembles are available for pupils to join. Listening resources for older pupils have been improved.
166. The good effects of these improvements are reflected in exam results and the high levels of musical performances. However, the poor accommodation imposes severe limits on what can be achieved musically. ICT and other resources are far from adequate, in spite of the head of department's ingenuity.

## Physical education

Provision for physical education is **satisfactory**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils who grasp concepts quickly and show good skills in observation, evaluation and discussion to improve one another's performances.
- Very good attendance, participation and behaviour in lessons and in extra-curricular activities.
- Inconsistencies in teaching, which do not always challenge pupils sufficiently.
- Lack of indoor facilities limit the curriculum and affect standards achieved in overcrowded space.

167. Many pupils enter the school with good basic skills and techniques. In Year 7 the majority are very competent swimmers, although there are a number of non-swimmers of mainly Asian origin who are making very good progress in improving their water confidence and stroke techniques. Standards are, however, affected by overcrowding in the pool, which restricts practice. Pupils have a good range of games skills, which they apply effectively to new activities such as hockey. By Year 9 passing and receiving skills are good, pupils demonstrate competence in ball control and the most capable individuals show versatility in their pass selection and good vision in exploiting space. Standards in gymnastics are less secure. In Year 7, pupils have very limited movement vocabulary and although they are aware of the need to improve movement quality, they are less certain of how to improve.
168. In the Year 10 core physical education programme, standards are unsatisfactory in basketball. Lack of continuity in Year 9 makes it more difficult for pupils to recall previous work and there is only basic understanding of the principles of the game. By Year 11, standards improve to the level of pupils in comparable schools. However, within the GCSE programme, pupils show very good standards in tennis and good written work shows understanding of key concepts and good use of subject vocabulary. Although only a relatively small number of pupils of very mixed abilities and interest choose to undertake GCSE coursework, examination results show a substantial majority achieving the higher A\*-C grades, well above national averages.
169. The achievement of pupils in relation to their prior knowledge is good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Achievement is consistent across all ethnic groups and between pupils of different abilities. The higher-attaining pupils are not always able to demonstrate their skills to the full in lessons but use the extra-curricular activities very effectively to further promote and extend their learning. Many of these pupils achieve representative honours and the school is justly proud of its national level sportsmen.
170. Teaching has good focus on developing pupils' planning and evaluating skills. Teachers ask questions of pupils, which, in the best examples, require them to recall prior knowledge and aid learning through consideration of broader application, the 'how and why'. Very good teacher-to-pupil and pupil-to-pupil relationships ensure an easy flow of information and confidence in response. The majority of lessons are well planned, with variety of relevant activities providing clear structure. This enables pupils to know what they are trying to achieve and to focus on what they are doing. Where weaknesses occur, this is often due to lack of sufficiently challenging tasks, failing to build effectively on what pupils already know. On occasion, over-direction by teachers limits pupils' creative responses and the middle and higher ability pupils sometimes underachieve. Assessment is used to good effect to inform teachers and parents of pupils' progress. There remains further scope to share assessment criteria with pupils so that they understand what they need to do to improve.
171. Departmental management is good. Teachers work together as an effective team and are consistent in promoting attendance, participation, very good behaviour and positive attitudes from pupils. There is an appropriate balance of planning, performing and evaluating within most lessons. Extra-curricular sport, that builds on activities undertaken in lessons provides the more talented individuals with the opportunity to test themselves against pupils in other schools. For others, there is a range of inter-form competitive sports, trips and visits, which enable broader participation and are well supported by pupils. Links with the community sports providers remains an area for further development. Although the school already benefits from close links with the 'old boys' association, which also includes access to coaching skills and additional playing facilities, there is potential for wider involvement for all.
172. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **Business studies**

The provision for business studies in Years 10 and 11 is **very good**.

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

- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Examination results are well above the national average.
- There is insufficient provision in the form of different levels of work for the less able pupils.
- ICT is not used as extensively as it could be.

173. Standards, overall, are well above the national average. The examination results have gone down slightly in the last three years but not very significantly so. In 2003, 87 per cent of pupils got the higher grades of A\* to C. In 2002, it was 95 per cent. In 2001, it was 100 per cent. In all years, the A\* to G grades were 100 per cent. The results are still well above the national average. The standards reached by the current pupils, as seen in lessons and in their written work, are also well above average. The pupils can talk meaningfully about such subjects as sole proprietors, cash flow and sources of finance. Their knowledge and understanding of the central functions of business and the problems they confront is strong. Overall, their achievement is very good as the teaching makes considerable demands on their knowledge, understanding and skills and they are doing as well as they can. The achievement of pupils who have English as an additional language is very good, as is the achievement of pupils with special educational needs. The progress of these two groups over the longer period of time is good. At times, the achievement of some less able pupils would be better with the provision of work on a more accessible level.

174. Overall, the teaching is very good. The teachers are confident in the subject matter and can put it across both clearly and efficiently. The learning, consequently, is very good and pupils react to the very good teaching in a positive and hard-working way. The fast pace and high expectations means that a lot of learning is done in the time available, so the pupils are both achieving very well and progress over the longer period of time is good. At times, more provision in the form of differentiated work would benefit the less able in the classes and more use of information technology would be of benefit to all pupils. The teaching makes a good contribution to citizenship in covering issues such as UK and European Union politics as well as moral aspects of business. Homework is set on a regular basis and there is regular assessment.

175. The leadership and management of the department has been under new arrangements for a very short period of time so no judgement can be made on this. The staffing is very good as are the accommodation and resources. Progress since the last inspection has been good as the schemes of work are now in place.

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

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

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

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

- The school's commitment to personal, social, health and citizenship education and the powerful influence of the ethos of the school and the wider opportunities within the school on the personal development of pupils.



- The major contribution of a broad, interesting and relevant subject-based curriculum as well as the personal, social and health education programme.
  - The need to refine the course structure and the time allocated to various units of the personal, social and health education programme, particularly the religious education elements in Years 10 and 11, so that there is sufficient time to tackle units in depth.
  - The development of assessment and reporting systems for citizenship.
176. As recognised elsewhere in the report, pupils achieve very high standards with regard to their attitudes and values and their very responsible attitudes to themselves and others. The school recognises the importance of personal, social and health education and citizenship and has invested considerable time and energy in developing a structured programme that makes a significant contribution to developing these values.
177. There are four main strands to the way that personal, social, health and citizenship education are taught in the school. The first strand in the way that citizenship in particular is taught is through the subjects of the curriculum. The school has carried out an audit of what is needed to be taught for citizenship and plotted where it is taught throughout the curriculum. Subjects such as geography, history, English and religious education, play a major role in, for example, exploring specific environmental issues or developing an understanding of the media and how, say, religion is portrayed. The audit reveals the richness of their citizenship experience, although to some degree pupils are not always aware that, for example, giving a power point presentation on acid rain in biology is part of their citizenship programme contributing to their understanding of global interdependence and responsibility.
178. The second strand is that citizenship is taught through the powerful influence of the school's particular ethos and the many and varied opportunities within it to take responsibility. The third strand is through special events, such as assemblies, fund-raising, competitions and, planned events, such as the 'Bring About Change Conference', although because of circumstances it did not actually happen.
179. The fourth strand is through the structured programme - a double period a week is given to this, a significant commitment of time given the pressure on the curriculum. Within this good programme, units of work cover a range of topics such as friendship and anti-bullying, approaches to study, careers, health education including drugs and sex education. It also covers specific units of citizenship, looking at, for example, gender and stereotypes.
180. It is important to stress the inter-relationship between these strands, which plait together to make a very good provision. Having recognised that, the rest of this subject report concentrates on the actual personal, social and health education and citizenship programme. A major problem for this course is that a lot has to be crammed into a limited time so that the amount of time to cover an aspect can be limited. For example, the religious education element for older pupils and the consequent depth and rigour in which elements of the religious education course can be explored is limited by the time available. Pupils in discussion find some elements much more helpful than others; they like the opportunities which they have to discuss, but have less regard for other aspects - particularly when worksheets are involved, likely when a lot of material has to be covered quickly. The school has established specialist teams to teach specific aspects, but much of the course is taught by teachers, some of who are less comfortable teaching outside their subject specialism.
181. In the sample of the lessons seen, there was variability in the quality of learning and achievement. The variability of teaching - some very good, indeed excellent in one sixth form general studies lesson, but satisfactory in others - led to learning which was sometimes less demanding than seen elsewhere in the curriculum. In one lesson, pupils' attitudes to the specific piece of work in hand, made it more difficult for the teacher. It may be helpful for the school to review the balance of opportunities within the course between covering the necessary material and provision of opportunities to use their knowledge and skills. There is

no doubt that had the 'Bring About Change' conference taken place, pupils would have displayed maturity, citizenship and persuasive skills of the highest order.

182. The school has explored with another school a portfolio assessment scheme. Such a scheme, if implemented, could help in stitching the various strands together both for staff and pupils. The senior management of the school manages very well the personal, social, health and citizenship education programme and the, overall, very good provision reflects the fundamental values of the school. There is no doubt that with refinement and some development of the personal, social, health and citizenship education the school has the potential for excellence in this aspect.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 13 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002. National comparative data is for all students - boys and girls.

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

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English Language	17	94.1	98.3	64.7	36.5	95.3	80.1
English Literature	9	100	98.5	77.8	43.7	102.2	84.3
Mathematics	94	91.5	93.3	52.1	52.2	83.6	84.7
Biology	35	100	91.6	57.1	36.3	90.9	74.1
Chemistry	27	100	94.0	51.9	45.9	91.1	81.1
Physics	44	97.7	92.8	61.4	42.8	91.4	78.6
ICT	33	100	89.1	39.4	22.4	82.4	64.1
Geography	6	100	97.1	50	40.5	83.3	80.9
History	31	100	97.1	71	41	98.1	81.2
Art and design	7	71.4	96.1	42.9	48.7	62.9	85.1
Business Studies	23	100	96.4	60.9	32.8	93	76.5
Economics	21	100	96.2	85.7	45.8	108.6	83.1

### *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
Business Studies	7	100	89.1	42.9	31.7	44.3	35.4
Chemistry	5	100	84.8	40	36.9	42	35.2
General Studies	117	85.5	78.6	22.2	25.7	31.4	30
ICT	11	90.9	78.2	36.4	20.6	38.2	28.5
Mathematics	16	75	74.2	37.5	34.3	33.8	31.3
Physics	11	90.9	82	27.3	36.2	38.2	34.3

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

### English

The provision for English is **excellent**.

#### Main features

- Students achieve well and results in the AS-level and A2-level English literature and English language and literature examinations are consistently high.
- Students display a high level of independent thinking and strong work ethic based on the high level of academic rigour and personal challenge.
- The quality of teaching is very good and teachers make very good use of assessment criteria to stretch their students. Assessment of students' work is very thorough.
- Relationships between staff and students are excellent. The ethos for learning is extraordinarily relaxing yet intense, and with a great sense of trust and support which enables both staff and students to deal with sensitive issues in an impartial way.
- The leadership and management of the department provide a very clear direction for improving students' academic work and personal growth.

183. Standards in the A-level examinations in English literature and English language and literature are high. Results over the last four years have been well above national average. The 2003 results confirm the good achievement of students in both subjects. In the 2003 AS-level English literature examination, nine-tenths of students obtained the highest grade, with well over half achieving grade A. No student achieved below grade C. There was a similar pattern in the English language and literature result, with most students reaching grade A or B. Students achieve well, with most exceeding their target grade.
184. The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' folders is well above average, with the more gifted and talented producing quality work similar to that of undergraduates. Students are achieving well because of the scholarly teaching, which makes demands on them to become independent thinkers capable of explaining and extending complex ideas with sensitivity. The Year 12 English literature and language lessons demonstrated students' ability to debate values and attitudes in their personal life, covering sensitive issues on racism, discipline and deviation from strong religious principles in the main faith groups. In this lesson, the teacher skilfully used basic preparatory notes and homework as a basis for debate. As a result, students made thought-provoking comments, which provided them with the opportunity to examine how and why words are laden with values and attitudes. Although Year 12 students are at the early stage of the AS-level courses, they are confident about their success in the subject and are achieving as expected. Achievement is good because students adopt a need-to-know attitude and read beyond the given lesson notes. They maintain substantial folders and their studious approach combined with high expectations are contributory factors in their achievement.
185. Students spoke very highly about the department, and are of the opinion that the high quality teaching in lower school drew them to the course and prepared them for the transition. They value the opportunity to take part in all forms of oral work as they are not 'spoon-fed' and this approach helps them to understand literary and linguistic concepts, some of which would be otherwise 'baffling'.
186. In both Years 12 and 13, students work to a high standard at all times. They are highly articulate and are very attentive during discussion. In reading, their notebooks, folders and essays, as well as their work in lessons, show a confident exploration of ideas, language and form. They read widely, showing initiative and autonomy as readers, using numerous texts or the Internet to seek out additional information on set texts and assignments. Students readily engage with a range of styles spanning different periods from, for example, Chaucer to Donne or Townsend. They are familiar with literary theories and linguistic devices and apply them to

their written work. Whereas most students are consistent in their analysis, a small number do not maintain a critical approach when examining a range of texts. However, by Year 13, these students begin to adopt a more critical approach in response to the detailed comments from their teachers. Standards in writing are generally good with a clear understanding of structuring their work and using the process of redrafting and editing to produce polished assignments. This was seen in the satirical writing and literary essays of the most accomplished writers, with representatives from different ethnic groups who write with poise and precision.

187. The quality of teaching is very good. Teachers know their subject very well and prepare thoroughly for their students. Their expectations of what students should achieve by the end of lessons are explicitly stated and summarised. The key feature of lessons is the high level of discussions, the unrelenting and intensive questioning, and the use of group work and feedback, which students enjoy. Teachers use this method to drive students to think analytically and, as a result, students find that they are developing the sophisticated analytical skills required to achieve the highest grades. Teachers use the assessment objectives throughout their teaching to drum into students the importance of meeting the assessment criteria for the top examination grade. Teaching is conducted in a very relaxed and open environment, which allows students to thrive. The seminar approach is used effectively to discuss papers on writers' style, form and use of language when comparing literary texts from different periods and cultures. Similarly, teachers help students to grapple with and understand different literary features by using stimulating resources to begin discussion before students apply the taught theory to their work. Marking of students' work is very thorough with a running commentary throughout their work.
188. Leadership and management of both courses are excellent. There is commitment and drive to raising standards through the regular reviews and analysis of results. Since the last inspection, the department introduced the English language and literature course as an alternative option, which now attracts an increasing number of students. Students begin the course after an informative induction, part of which involves peer mentoring Year 11 pupils. Students are made aware of the demands that will be made on them through the literature, the work given to them before the course begins, the scheme of work and the stimulating enrichment activities that brings them into contact with academic lectures and places of cultural interest.

## Modern foreign languages

The focus of the post-16 modern languages inspection was on French and German but Spanish was also sampled.

### French

The quality of the provision in French is **very good**.

#### Main strengths

- Very effective teaching.
- Contact with native speakers.
- Wealth of authentic materials.
- Extra-curricular activities, such as work experience in France.
- Hard working ethos.

189. As numbers entered for examinations in French in the sixth form are small, valid comparisons with national figures are not possible but approximately two-thirds of candidates have gained A or B grades over the last three years. Of the three lessons seen, two displayed excellent teaching and in the third teaching was very good. Standards of work, both in lessons seen and in work completed during the course, were very good and students achieve well. In a Year 13

lesson, the students held a debate on environmental issues in which they were all able to express and justify their views fluently and with confidence in accurate French. There had been effective and diligent preparation as evidenced by their accurate written notes. A wide range of authentic materials had been used to research the subject and they had acquired good techniques for organising their ideas into coherent and logical arguments. All students make very good progress because of the high expectations of their teachers, who challenge them to produce of their best, the fact that lessons are conducted totally in French, the subject matter is relevant and the quality and quantity of work done at home extends and reinforces work done in class. The department encourages students to be enthusiastic about their language learning and helps students to use their language actively. The work is well organised to provide a wide range of topics for discussion and language related tasks.

## German

The quality of the provision in German is **good**.

### Main strengths

- Good teaching.
- Number of enrichment opportunities, such as trips to Germany.
- Positive attitudes and relationships.
- Highly effective marking and individual attention.

190. Due to the small numbers taking German examinations in the sixth form a valid comparison with national figures cannot be made but approximately two-thirds of candidates have gained A or B grades over the last three years and only 1 pupil has not passed. Two lessons were seen; students' work was scrutinised and discussions were held with most of the students. In the two lessons observed standards of work were good or very good, as were standards evidenced by students' written work undertaken during the course. Students were able to hold natural and interesting discussions in German, displaying good pronunciation and intonation, some complex language structures and the ability to sustain and develop conversation, with some showing initiative in varying their style and register. In one lesson pupils were able to speak confidently, accurately and fluently in German justifying their opinions on abortion. They make good progress throughout the German course because of the effective teaching: teachers' mastery of the subject, high expectations which challenge the students, attention to accuracy, use of German as the normal means of communication in class and the effective and helpful marking of students' work. Students all work hard to extend their familiarity with the language and achieve well. The department helps students to seek opportunities to use their language actively. Where first and second year students are taught together the teaching is organised effectively to benefit both groups.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is very good. The inspection covered the A2-level and AS-examination courses offered by the school: pure mathematics, mechanics, and statistics modules. Because of the very large number of students taking A2 and AS-level qualifications, the school does not offer discrete key skills courses.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in A2-level and AS-level mathematics are well above national figures.
- The majority of students achieve well over their post-16 courses. There are good opportunities for gifted students to extend their study through the further mathematics options.
- There is an exceptionally high take-up of mathematics by students in the school. Retention rates are good. However, a small but significant number of students begin their post-16 mathematics from too low a base at GCSE and, as a result, do not succeed.

- Teaching is good and seeks to develop students' understanding. Relationships between students and teachers are very good. Students have confidence in their teachers.
  - Marking and informal assessment are satisfactory, but more could be done to standardise interim assessment.
  - The leadership and management of the department are good.
191. Standards are well above average, overall. The results for 2002 indicate that over half of mathematics candidates obtained the higher A and B grades in the A2-level examinations. The 2003 results show a further rise, with three out of five of post-16 students gaining these higher grades. Students' AS-level results indicate very good pass rates, with almost sixty per cent of the cohort gaining A and B grades in mechanics and pure mathematics modules and fifty per cent in the statistic module. The lower statistics results reflect the lower starting points of some students taking this module.
192. Most students achieve well by the end of their studies in mathematics. A small number drop out at the end of Year 12, mostly with good reason. Other students who do less well than expected in the AS-level examinations are usually successful in resits, and achieve expected grades in the A2-level papers. For the very small numbers who are ungraded at the A2 level exam, poor attendance, low starting points, and a refusal to adopt good, individualised advice are the main contributory factors. Gifted mathematicians achieve very well through the opportunities to study further mathematics, with many taking up mathematics in higher education. Overall retention rates are high, including the rates of those who join mathematics courses from other institutions. Over eighty students completed A2-level courses in 2003. Students from a range of ethnic groups are generously represented among the school's successful mathematicians.
193. The standard of work seen in lessons and in students' records in the current Years 12 and 13 confirms good achievement. Students' work in each area of mathematics is well under-pinned by their manipulative algebra and numerical skills developed by the end of Year 11. Students studying further mathematics were very competent in applying these skills both in work in pure mathematics on areas of regions, and in mechanics when dealing with questions on relative motion. Students showed interest in scholarly discussion of their work. High attaining students in Year 12 had particularly good recall of GCSE skills and had made a very smooth transition to AS-level courses. When working from written questions, students interpreted the information given with precision.
194. Teaching is good, overall. There is a small proportion of very good teaching. All teachers have a very good command of mathematics and understand clearly the requirements of the examination specifications. The best lessons are very carefully structured conceptually and give careful thought to the development of the students' thinking skills, as, for example, in a lesson on curve sketching. Students report a high level of satisfaction with the collaborative ethos and tutorial style adopted by teachers, in whom they have great confidence. Relationships are very good and students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own progress.
195. The mathematics department's provision for post-16 mathematics is well-managed. Teachers are enthusiastic and committed to improving their students' attainment. The department makes good use of the school's review and target-setting process to track the students' progress. However, more could be done to standardise interim assessments so that early underachievement can be more readily identified.
196. The department has sustained the high standards identified at the previous inspection, particularly notable given recent changes to specifications for post-16 mathematics. However, although some progress has been made in enhancing the students' mathematics through ICT, much remains to be done in both the training of staff and in resources. The department lacks sufficient immediate and relevant hardware to ensure that all post-16 students benefit from helpful dynamic demonstrations.

## SCIENCE

In the sixth form, large groups of students study biology, chemistry and physics. They build very successfully on their GCSE work, to make good progress and reach high standards compared with all other students nationally. Many move on to follow science and engineering degree courses at university. In 2002, in A-level physics, all students gained an A-E grade with almost two thirds getting an A or B. The results in 2003 were less good but still significantly higher than the national figures. There has been an upward trend in chemistry over the last two years, with the best results in 2003. Over two-thirds gained an A or B grade, with all getting A-E grades. For biology, there is a similar pattern of improvement for A or B grades in recent years but not all students gained A-E grades in 2003. At the time of the last inspection, in 1998, results in science at all levels were high. Since then they have been maintained and in some areas they have marginally improved.

The focus of the inspection was on biology and chemistry but work in physics was also sampled

### Biology

Provision in biology is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in biology are high.
  - Students have an outstanding attitude to their work.
  - Teaching is competent and challenging.
  - There is a need to formalise management procedures to ensure a more strategic approach to departmental administration, evaluation and future planning.
197. Students attain high standards in A2-level biology compared with all other students nationally. In 2002 and 2003 well over half of the students achieved an A or B grade. In 2002 all students passed with an A to E grade. Students make good progress based on their performance at GCSE, doing better than might have been predicted.
198. The success of the department is reflected in the growing numbers attracted to the subject, with over 70 students in the September 2003 AS-level biology cohort. A significant number of these come from other schools, only gaining a place if they have excellent GCSE science grades. Most of the newcomers have followed a double award GCSE science course. They, in particular, would benefit from more structured support at the beginning of Year 12 to ensure smoother transition to AS-level biology. At the last inspection results were significantly higher than for other selective schools and this position has been maintained.
199. Students have an outstanding capacity for learning that enables them to optimise the opportunities offered to them. They are well-motivated by their career choices, many aspiring to study medicine and dentistry in prestigious universities. Most students apply an intellectual curiosity to their genuine fascination with the natural world. They take great pride in all aspects of their work, especially in carrying out problem-solving experimental tasks and producing detailed and incisive reports in laboratory notebooks.
200. Teaching is good across the department, with newer members of staff developing their practice well and benefiting substantially from the experience and skills of those who have taught at this level for many years. Teaching is characterised by excellent subject knowledge delivered with enthusiasm and challenge. At times, teacher exposition is lengthy so that other planned activities are delayed and students struggle to maintain an active involvement in the lesson. Questioning is used well to make students think, prompting their ability to analyse information, speculate on a range of theories and design new ways to tackle problems. This was seen in a lesson on the biochemistry of the carbohydrate when the teacher elicited ideas from the students on how the molecular structure of these chemicals is related to specific functions. The effectiveness of questioning would be further enhanced if students were given



more time to consider their response before being asked to contribute to class discussion. Work is pitched at a very high level and teachers look ahead to what will be required in higher education. There are realistic expectations that students will reinforce and extend what is done in class by independent study and research.

201. Across the department teachers use different techniques to deliver subject content, and students particularly appreciate this access to a variety of learning styles when it is offered. For example, in the last year they have completed a research-based essay on the human genome project, prepared and delivered seminar presentations, produced posters and leaflets, and used audio-visual resources, including information technology. Practical work takes a high priority, with an excellent series of laboratory tasks integrated clearly into the theoretical work of each module of the course. Students are very confident in handling the mathematical aspects of work so that processing and presenting numerical data does not get in the way of understanding the biological concepts and principles. An example of this was evident in a lesson when students were able to interpret computer-generated data and graphs to develop their understanding of a specific biochemical process.
202. Work is assessed regularly and students receive very detailed feedback on their performance. Overall assessment is based on a wide profile of ongoing tasks and tests and students feel well supported by this monitoring process. At present, however, there is no collection and scrutiny of standardised assessments across the department. This would help staff to evaluate and develop their teaching and to measure the achievement of individuals within a broader objective framework.
203. Teachers have adapted their expertise well to the demands of new examination specifications, to the modular structure and to coursework requirements. At present, however, students do not have the opportunity to take the first modular test in the January of Year 12. This puts an excessive examination burden on students at the end of Year 12 and some report that it adversely affected the AS level grades that they achieved, overall.
204. The biology department is led and managed with enthusiasm and commitment. There are well-constructed schemes of work in place as well as access to good textbooks, library resources and well-maintained laboratory equipment. There is increasing and effective use of information technology, both within the department and in the adjacent ICT suite. As the department grows a more formal approach is needed to routine administration, analysis of student performance and evaluation of departmental effectiveness. Such developments would support the further growth of this already thriving department.

## Chemistry

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

Chemistry is an increasingly popular subject. Standards are now above those nationally at both AS and A level. Students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment in chemistry because of the good teaching they receive and their excellent attitudes to their learning.

### Strengths and weaknesses

- Above national standards at both AS and A2 level.
- Teachers have excellent knowledge and understanding of chemistry. Good teaching is leading to good learning. Teachers are experienced at teaching at an advanced level and have adapted well to the new courses.
- Students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment in chemistry.
- Very good preparation for A level is provided by the separate chemistry course at GCSE.
- Make better use of the modular approach.
- Increase the monitoring time for the Head of Department.
- Increase the number of computers and data-logging sensors.

205. GCE A Level examination entries have increased steadily over the last three years. Students' average points score has increased from the national average in 2001 to well above the national average in 2003 (national figures still to be confirmed). In 2003, all students gained a pass grade. Importantly, for these very able students, the proportion of students who achieved the highest grades, A and B, was high. In 2003, 72 per cent of students obtained the highest grades compared with 43 per cent, which was the national average in 2001. Very few students have failed to complete the course. Students obtain better results than might be expected, based on their performance at GCSE.
206. Results from AS Level are more variable, but in 2003 the proportion of students who gained a pass grade was above the national average, with the proportion obtaining the highest grades about the national average. The number of students choosing to study chemistry is increasing. There are currently four groups in both Years 12 and 13. Chemistry is a very cost-effective subject in the sixth form. The retention rates between Year 12 and 13 are high.
207. The standard of work seen is above average. Students have very high levels of mathematics, which enable them to cope well with the calculations required for chemistry. For example, students in Year 13 had no difficulty in working out the equilibrium constant for the hydrolysis of an ester from their experimental data. By Year 13 students have well-developed laboratory skills. They used these skills very successfully to confirm the effect of increasing the concentration of the reactants on the position of equilibrium. In another lesson it was clear that students have well-developed research skills, which they were able to demonstrate when discussing the properties of group 4 elements. Students learn very well because the teachers use very effective and challenging questioning techniques. For example, in a Year 12 lesson, students learnt very well about the stability of shells and sub shells when analysing ionisation energy data. A key feature of this lesson was the way the teacher elicited information from the students by careful questioning and prompting. Students have very complete notes from which to revise. These notes show a consistent approach by the teachers, with the correct amount of intervention.
208. Teaching is good, overall, and students learn well. The principal features of teaching are excellent knowledge and understanding of chemistry, good planning, and a wide range of methods and resources used to aid learning. Teachers provide students with many opportunities to develop their basic skills of communication and numeracy. However, because of a lack of computers and data-logging sensors teachers are not able to give the students sufficient opportunities to develop their ICT skills. Currently the department makes no special provision for gifted and talented pupils other than to provide them with extension work.
209. Students show exceptionally high levels of interest. Excellent relationships with one another and with their teachers lead to a very purposeful working atmosphere in the classroom. Students take pride in their work, as demonstrated by the very high standard of presentation of their written work. It is a credit both to the students and their teachers that they have such an accurate record of their work from which to revise.
210. The head of department has good leadership and management skills. Although relatively new to the school he is working closely with his colleagues to ensure that the courses are well planned and the examination board's requirements met. It is very important that the department takes full advantage of the modular approach. Up to now, students take all three Module Tests at the end of Year 12, when there is an opportunity for them to take the first Module test in the January of Year 12. Similarly there is opportunity for students to take a Module Test in the January of Year 13. Teachers make good use of Hazcards, but do not have sufficient written risk assessments for the experiments or demonstrations that are carried out.

211. Since the last inspection the department has made the following improvements. The number of students opting for chemistry has increased, which is testimony to the confidence the students have with their teachers. Standards have improved. The department has still to improve the provision of computers and data-logging sensors.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

Provision for computing was inspected and the provision for ICT sampled.

### **ICT**

The provision for ICT is **good**. Standards in AS and A2 are above average. The course meets the needs of the students, is well taught and develops good habits of independent learning.

### **Computing**

Overall provision for computing is **good**.

### **Strengths and weaknesses**

- The subject knowledge and teaching of specialists within the department, provides a high level of challenge to students.
- Very good standards in coursework show that students have a very good grasp of the principles and practice of the subject.
- Very good relationships between staff and students create a positive working atmosphere.
- Learning in some lessons is impaired by gaps in wider subject knowledge.

212. Results in the A2 level and AS examinations are above national standards, with the AS last year improving over the previous year. Students' coursework shows a high level of knowledge, understanding and reasoning that students apply successfully to the problems they have selected. Their ideas are expressed clearly and fluently. They use programming skilfully to meet the specifications of their designs. Teachers set high standards by demanding a well-structured approach, with detailed support for arguments, encouraging good effort while rejecting work that does not reflect the students' potential standard. Good relationships between teachers and students create a good atmosphere for learning. Teachers respond effectively to their assessment of students' needs, giving good support to individuals. In the few instances where this is not so, teachers new to a class made false assumptions about the students' prior experience so that they were ill-equipped to carry out a task. Teachers work well together under the leadership of the new head of department who provides a good role model for less experienced teachers. Students' achievement is, therefore, good by the time that they reach the end of the course.

213. Students express appreciation of the department's success in overcoming disruption caused in the recent past by staffing problems. They are confident that their teachers are well-organised and knowledgeable about both the subject and the course requirements. They enjoy the good access to high quality equipment that has been brought about by the school's investment in computers. Students studying computing have chosen the course because its emphasis on programming suits their personal preferences. The few who drop out of the course do so because of the need for other qualifications, and have usually attained high grades in the AS examination.

214. The computing course has, therefore, shown good improvement since the last inspection, in the results attained, the quality of departmental leadership and teaching, and in the level of equipment available to students.

## HUMANITIES

The provision for classical studies, geography and religious education was inspected. The provision for history was sampled.

The provision for history is excellent. Very good quality teaching and learning leads to very high attainment. Results, which are significantly above average, show a continuous trend upwards.

### Classical studies

The provision is **very good**.

### Strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very high. The teacher has an outstanding knowledge and obvious enthusiasm.
- Students have a very positive attitude to the subject.

215. The work of the current sixth form is of a very good standard, although the fluctuating numbers in very small groups mean that it is difficult to identify significant trends. However, results are similar to those seen nationally in schools of this type. There are regular small but viable groups opting to study it for AS and A level. Sixth-form students have a very mature appreciation of the value of learning Latin. They appreciate how it will enrich their other studies - whether it is the analytical approach that appeals to the science specialist or the literary side that an English specialist finds congenial. The teacher has an outstanding grasp of the subject matter and an obvious enthusiasm that stimulates students so that those pupils who opt for the subject at Advanced Level all have very positive attitudes towards it. Teaching is very good and challenges the students.

### Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching.
- Curriculum planning provides pupils with a wide range of learning activities.
- Very thorough assessment supports students' progress.
- The number of students taking geography has increased markedly over the past three years.

216. The number of students studying geography in Year 13, in the years up to the summer of 2003 was low. In 2003, four of the five students who sat the A2 papers attained grade B and this was in line with expectations. Numbers are growing: thirteen Year 12 students took AS papers in 2003, of whom eleven attained grades A or B, and nine have continued with the subject into Year 13; three of these intend to study for geography-related degrees. There are now twenty students in Year 12. The increase in popularity of the subject is a result of improvements in teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11, with consequent higher levels of attainment. Students who are currently in the sixth form are making very good progress. They show a high degree of motivation and are comfortable working in a wide variety of learning styles. For example, in a Year 13 lesson exploring the social, economic and physical issues affecting the development of the Wadla region of Ethiopia, students assumed roles from photographs, made incisive observations and clearly presented them so that the class could build up a complete perspective. The level of students' study skills, including the organisation of most students' files, is impressive.

217. Teaching in the sixth form is very good. The teachers have a very secure knowledge of the subject and pass on their enthusiasm to their students. They have an excellent relationship with students and students clearly enjoy their work. Good lesson planning, based on well-chosen case studies, results in lively lessons that fully engage and extend students; one Year 13 student described geography as “a very interactive subject”. Examination technique is taught throughout the course, and to this end there are more extended writing exercises than in most schools; an example of high achievement was a very fluent synthesis of source material by a Year 12 student of population changes in the Gower peninsula. Teachers provide good support for learning: the aims of the work and its context in the syllabus are made clear and work is marked very thoroughly.
218. The quality of leadership is very good. The sixth form has benefited from the appointment of the current head of department in September 2002 in similar ways to the rest of the school. Courses have been evaluated and changed and a wider range of strategies adopted. Good practice is shared.
219. Since the previous inspection, and especially in the past year, there has been very good improvement in the quality of provision and the achievement of students.

### **Religious education**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards at AS/A2 level are well above average.
  - Teaching is very good.
  - Excellent relationships between students and their teacher create an excellent climate for learning.
  - Contributions towards the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good.
  - The setting of detailed and more focused targets, against which pupil progress can be identified, and sharing these with students.
220. Standards in the AS level course in Year 12 are well above the national average. In Year 13, standards at A level are also well above national averages.
221. In lessons and work seen in Year 12, students demonstrate a very good understanding of philosophical and religious concepts. Students demonstrated their ability to produce well-structured and balanced arguments. Teaching challenges students to analyse material and form judgments about the views of a number of philosophers. The teacher’s very good use of discussion, and high expectations, contributed very well to students’ ability to think independently. In Year 13, students demonstrate their ability to use ethical language. Through the teacher’s challenging and enabling approach, students use their skills of analysis to draw out ideas and to make distinctions between opinions, beliefs and facts. Discussion enables students to deepen their learning and respect the views of others. Excellent teacher intervention enabled students to challenge the traditional wisdom and expand their understanding. In one lesson, students demonstrated their understanding of the range of views expressed about the word “good” in the writings of Thomas More.
222. The teacher has high expectations of students and, as a consequence, students have equally high expectations of themselves. Students use their skills in information and communication technology for research purposes. Greater availability of ICT facilities would enable students to develop this facility and raise standards even further. Students have developed their ability to investigate and interpret and this allows them to move quickly into the key skills of analysis, evaluation and synthesis. They achieve very well and make very good progress. Teaching is

always very good and has a significant impact on pupil achievement. The teacher creates an excellent climate for learning. Extension work and coursework are used to good effect in allowing students to reflect on the information they have gained in class.

223. Overall, students' attitudes to learning are excellent. They are very well-motivated and apply themselves to the work. They collaborate very well with one another and work at a productive pace. The relationship between teacher and students is excellent, as is the level of support for individuals, both academically and personally.
224. Assessment of students' work is generally sound and very helpful comments made on their work. The procedures provide a satisfactory basis for assessing what students know and understand. However, the department does not set targets that are related to levels of attainment. Consequently, students are unclear about the standards they are reaching and what they need to do to improve.
225. There are opportunities for all sixth form students to study some aspects of religion in the general studies programme. Although the school does provide a minimal entitlement, this aspect is underdeveloped.
226. The examination course makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students, so providing opportunities for students to explore world issues of justice, relationships and personal beliefs. In lessons, the teaching encourages students to explore their personal views about religious and moral issues.
227. Curriculum leadership and management are good with a clear sense of purpose and direction. The head of the department approaches the task with enthusiasm and commitment.
228. Since the last inspection, standards have risen. The number of students now taking religious studies at AS/A2 level has increased. The department makes a substantial contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students. Overall, improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

Two courses in this curriculum area were inspected. GCE AS/A product design and AS/A electronics. Only a small number of lessons was observed. Work from both courses was scrutinised and discussions were held with students from both courses.

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Overall standards, and especially the performance of students in electronics.
  - The very good quality of teaching across the subject.
  - Very positive attitudes of students to their studies.
  - Access to computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing equipment in the department is inadequate to meet the students' needs.
229. Standards in product design are good and very good in electronics. Overall, results are well above average with almost all of electronics students achieving higher grades. The very small number of product design students achieved passes.
230. Student achievement in lessons is very good. Students make considerable advances in their knowledge and understanding during their sixth form years. For example, Year 13 students carried out an extremely mature discussion when considering microprocessor systems and machine code software. Students taking the product design course showed very good understanding of the design processes together with a high level of analysis when considering

the realisation of the designs. One student working on a warning device related to towing was keen to explore processes he had not previously worked in. This is an indication of the desire evident in all students for self-improvement. The small groups of students in both year groups make very good progress throughout the course, achieving well beyond the level expected. Examples from examination projects highlight the high quality outcomes and the thought students put into their work. The quality of construction and finish is above average in product design. Students in electronics seek to develop such items as affordable heart monitors for use in Third World countries. This is an indication of the broader development of the individual and how they are all encouraged to think beyond their own cultures.

231. Teaching across the subject is very good. Teachers have a very good command of their subject. They have high expectations of students, and these are almost always realised as a result of their ability to encourage and engage the students. Teachers make very effective use of the time and resources available to them. Students are able to acquire knowledge and understanding at a very good rate, which is the result of a combination of very good teaching and substantial application by students. They demonstrate considerable ability to work independently and to support one another when this is deemed to be appropriate. Good examples were observed of students clarifying learning points, thereby assisting the teacher and helping their peers.
232. As groups are small, teachers are able to provide much guidance and advice, one-to-one. It is in these situations that much formative assessment takes place. Students have a good understanding of how well they are performing and how they can improve further.
233. Leadership and management in the subject are good, with evident co-operation between subject staff. Since the previous inspection, little has changed in terms of the curriculum offered. Students are not afforded the opportunity to study design and technology in food or textiles. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

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

The school provides courses in art and music. Music was sampled. The quality of provision for **music is good**. The head of department's superb musical skills and his excellent teaching give students a rare opportunity to learn fast and reach very high levels of musical understanding and performance. Attainment at A level is impressive: in 2003 three of the four candidates obtained A grade passes and the fourth a B grade. Over the same three-year period A-level results have compared well with the school's internal averages and projections.

### **Art**

The provision for art and design is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- AS and A2 results in 2003.
  - Knowledgeable, enthusiastic teaching.
  - Imaginative and ambitious expressive painting.
234. A-level results improved sharply in 2003, having been below the national average in 2002. Results have fluctuated widely since the previous inspection and no overall statistically reliable trend can be identified. AS results were good in 2003.
235. Two students are currently embarked on the AS course; only one of whom was present during the inspection. Work seen during the inspection is expressive, vigorous and imaginative and shows a command of a wide range of mainly two-dimensional media. A2 students have made a good start on this part of their course having had a very successful AS year. Their current work is confident and expressive and is well grounded in direct observation.

236. Students have made good progress and achievement is good; their course explores themes of considerable personal significance to them. AS work linked to the theme of movement relates meaningfully to the work of the Italian Futurists. A2 students achieved good standards throughout their AS course. Their portfolios show that most students have good knowledge of art, link their work to relevant artists' work, and that they are technically very competent. Contextual studies that take a thematic rather than an artist-by-artist approach cover a broader sweep of art history and are therefore of a higher standard. For example, a project on "the use of photography in art" gave an interesting insight into the way artists have used photography since its invention. Acrylic paintings on hardboard panels are very competent and are displayed well throughout the school. In exploring the work of artists, students are heavily reliant on writing rather than the range of other media open to them.
237. Teaching is good and leads to good learning. It is knowledgeable and shows good understanding of examination syllabus requirements. A very enthusiastic approach, full of ideas and suggestions, is effective in inspiring the students and enabling them to produce imaginative, well-executed work. Close individual tuition means that students receive very good spoken feedback about their work and know what they need to do to achieve high standards.
238. Sixth form provision is managed effectively. The programme is well planned, but the time allocated to the teaching of the subject is less than is desirable and timetable clashes prevent some students from attending all of their lessons. Students share the accommodation with the main school and do not have an area where they can leave work in progress. Materials are in short supply and students report they are required to purchase materials for their own use. The provision is mainly for painting and drawing and facilities for work in other media such as ICT, photography or three-dimensional work are very limited.
239. Few references were made to the sixth form in the previous report. Attainment was reported to be very good. Examination results in 2003 indicate similar standards have been achieved. As in the previous inspection, ICT provision is unsatisfactory.

## **HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL**

In the sixth form there is a good provision on the timetable for recreational sport in Year 12. Although there is currently no course running, there is opportunity on the options timetable for Advanced Level study at AS and A2 levels. There is scope for the further involvement of Year 13 pupils in physical education activities throughout the school.

There are no health-related or leisure and travel courses.

## **BUSINESS**

### **Business education**

The focus was on the advanced business course, but economics was also sampled. In economics, although the examination results fell last year, the standards are still well above the national average. Two lessons were observed and the teaching was very good and the students were achieving very well.

Overall, the provision in the business course is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers have strong subject knowledge and lessons are very well prepared.
- The quality of teaching is very good, overall.
- The examination results are well above the national average.



- There is insufficient provision in the form of different levels of work for the students who find the work more difficult than others.
  - There is insufficient use of computers.
240. Standards, overall, are at present well above the national average. There is a rising trend in the GCE A-level examination results. In 2003, 64 per cent gained the higher A–B grades. In 2002 it was 60 per cent, and in 2001, 32 per cent. In all three years, 100 per cent of the students gained A to E grades. The standard of work reached by current students, as seen in lessons and in their written work, are also well above average, including those from minority ethnic groups. At times the achievement of the less able is not so strong, but given more time and attention they quickly catch up. The students make good progress in knowledge and understanding of the central ideas of accounting and business strategy and they can meaningfully relate these to the economic environment in which business operates. They have a very good grasp of the technical language which business uses and they can use statistics with ease and interpret graphs in a ready manner. The students can relate their business knowledge and understanding to present day businesses that are often in the news. Overall, their achievement is very good as the teaching makes considerable demands on their knowledge, understanding and skills and they are doing as well they can.
241. Overall, the teaching is very good. The expertise of the teachers is a very significant fact in the strong learning of the students. The teachers are confident in subject matter and the lessons are always very well prepared. The material is put across very clearly and with lots of examples being given from present day businesses. This enables the students to relate their learning to real-life situations. The pace in the lessons is fast and the expectations are high. This makes for very good achievement by the majority, but at times the less able are a little left behind when there is insufficient differentiated material for them to use. Information technology is also not exploited to the full owing to problems of access. Homework is set on a regular basis and there is regular monitoring and assessment. In general, the demands made on the students are considerable and this means that the progress of the students over the longer period of time is good. The progress of students who have English as an additional language, and those who have special educational needs, is also good. The department has built up a large number of contacts with local and other businesses and this is a valuable part of the pupils' learning. The teaching makes a significant input both to literacy and numeracy in the extensive writing that they do and in calculations. The students respond very positively to the teaching and work hard in the lessons.
242. The leadership and management of the department has been under new arrangements for a very short period of time so no judgement can be made on this. The staffing is very good, as is the accommodation and resources. The department has extensive documentation that includes a handbook, schemes of work and a development plan. Progress since the last inspection has been good, as the schemes of work are now in place. Provision for the different levels of ability in the classes has received some attention, particularly for the more able students, but has yet to cater more fully for the needs of the less able. Assessment is now in place. Some progress has been made on the use of information technology but more could still be done.

### **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

243. The General Studies course is used to support the personal, social and health education. The course contains an element of religious education and the school meets statutory requirement to teach religious education in the sixth form.

## 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>2</b>	<b>2</b>
How inclusive the school is		2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	2	2
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>		<b>2</b>
Pupils' achievement	3	3
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>		<b>1</b>
Attendance	3	1
Attitudes	1	1
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1	2
Pupils' 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	3
How well pupils learn	2	2
The quality of assessment	3	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	1	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	5	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4	4
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>		<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	2	2
The leadership of the headteacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	2	2
The effectiveness of management	2	2

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