

INSPECTION REPORT

DEVONPORT HIGH SCHOOL FOR BOYS

Stoke, Plymouth

LEA area: City of Plymouth

Unique reference number: 113530

Headmaster: Dr N M Pettit

Lead inspector: Mr R Passant

Dates of inspection: 20 – 24 October 2003

Inspection number: 259169

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:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Male
Number on roll:	1101
School address:	Paradise Road Stoke Plymouth
Postcode:	PL1 5QP
Telephone number:	01752 208787
Fax number:	01752 208788
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Charles D Evans BA FCA
Date of previous inspection:	11 May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Devonport High School for Boys is a selective school for boys aged 11 to 18. It serves Plymouth and a wide surrounding area, with many pupils travelling significant distances. The number on roll (1101) has grown since the last inspection. It is over-subscribed with a high reputation. It is roughly average in size. Attainment on entry to the school is very high; all pupils take an eleven-plus examination set by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and administered by the school. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is 3.4 per cent, which is well below the national average. The school is, however, more socially diverse than this figure would suggest. The percentage of pupils with English as an additional language (1.8 per cent) is low. The percentage of pupils identified as having special needs, (3.3 per cent) is well below the national average. One pupil has a statement of educational need. A number of pupils are hearing-impaired. The mobility of pupils, that is the percentage of pupils joining or leaving the school at other than the usual time, is very low. The school has a residential centre in Uzel in Brittany, which is used extensively throughout the school. The school was awarded specialist engineering college status in September 2002. The school is a member of a city-wide partnership to extend educational opportunities for post-16 students.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2728	Roderick Passant	Lead inspector	English as an additional language Drama
11104	Michael Fleming	Lay inspector	
31673	John Gwyer-Roberts	Team inspector	Music Music (sixth form)
11672	Peter Harle	Team inspector	Art and design
27240	William Hooper	Team inspector	Latin Latin (sixth form)
14490	Susan Jackson	Team inspector	Special educational needs History
30136	Dennis Johnson	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages French (sixth form) FLAW (Foreign Language at Work)
1413	Sa'ad Khaldi	Team inspector	Chemistry (sixth form) Physics (sixth form) Science
32284	Christine Mayle	Team inspector	Mathematics Mathematics (sixth form)
10288	John Richards	Team inspector	Design and technology Design and technology (sixth form) Information and communication technology
1578	Maureen Sinclair	Team inspector	Business education (sixth form) Citizenship
31192	John Stewart	Team inspector	Physical education Physical education (sixth form)
32122	Judith Straw	Team inspector	Religious education
15372	Patricia Walker	Team inspector	English English (sixth form)
14573	Hugh Wareing	Team inspector	Geography Geography (sixth form)

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates

Demeter House
Station Road
Cambridge
CB1 2RS

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Devonport High School for Boys deserves its high reputation. It is a **very good school** with **many excellent features**. The school provides **very good value for money**. It is a school that has a very clear vision of how it wants to develop. So that the pupils¹ have the best opportunities to succeed in the 21st century, it fuses, very successfully, traditional elements, drawn from its legacy as a long-standing selective boys' school, with a commitment to looking beyond its walls towards the local community, Europe and internationally. This, along with a vision of the future, is the driving force behind its specialist status as an engineering college, which has brought a dynamism beginning to be apparent across subjects, particularly, but not exclusively, design and technology, mathematics and science. The school provides a richness and depth of experience allied to a powerful learning ethos which ensures that boys attain very high standards, academically and personally. The boys and their achievements across all aspects of school life are its best ambassadors and evidence of the high quality of education they receive.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Outstanding leadership by the headmaster², very effectively supported by key staff, which provides clarity of vision for the school's development, critical self-evaluation and, building on a shared commitment to the pupils by all staff, the forging of effective teams dedicated to further improvement.
- Good and, very often, very good teaching characterised by excellent subject knowledge, very high expectations and high quality personal relationships with pupils which creates a momentum for learning so that pupils achieve well, often very well, and attain very high standards in their GCSE examinations.
- A very good curriculum, enhanced further by the excellent enrichment opportunities, which interests and engages the pupils.
- The very high quality of care and guidance that ensures that the school is one in which pupils feel secure.
- The development of pupils' sense of self-esteem and confidence; an absence of brashness and coarse, immature behaviour; pupils who are at ease with themselves, their abilities and the abilities of others and, in the main, show excellent respect for the feelings and beliefs of others.
- There are no major weaknesses. Developments are identified effectively in the school development plan. They are, in the main, matters of refinement of existing systems and ensuring consistency within and across departments.

Changes since the last inspection

The school has made very good progress since the last inspection. Provision for design and technology, religious education, information and communication technology (ICT), accommodation issues, spiritual provision and meeting statutory requirements have all improved very significantly. There has been some, but insufficient, improvements in the provision for music.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2000	2001	2002	2002
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A*	A*	A*	D
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	A*	A*	A*	

Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average

¹ The term 'pupils' is used to describe boys attending the school in Years 7 to 11. The term 'students' is used to describe those boys attending the school for their post-16 education.

² The school, as part of its link with tradition, uses the term headmaster to describe the role of headteacher. It is therefore used throughout the report.

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

The performance at GCSE is very high compared to all schools- it lies within the top five per cent of schools. The comparison with similar schools is a comparison with schools which attained similar points scores in National Curriculum tests in Year 9 and includes boys' and girls' performance. Devonport pupils attain standards at GCSE that are similar to those of boys in other selective boys' schools. The trend for improvement at GCSE is in line with the trend nationally. Overall, given their capability, pupils **achieve well** to sustain **very high standards** over a broad range of subjects over the five years of compulsory education.

Performance in National Curriculum tests in Year 9 is in the top five per cent of schools. In 2002 pupils made above average progress in Years 7 to 9 and average progress in Years 10 to 11. Whilst the majority of pupils attain or exceed their target grades, there are a small number of pupils who do not attain as well.

The school sets demanding targets and evaluates examination data carefully. The school development plan targets further improvement at GCSE. The majority of pupils go onto tertiary education, about 85 per cent of the pupils joining the school's sixth form.

Pupils with special educational needs make good progress as a result of the overall good provision. In the lessons seen attainment against national expectations for pupils with special educational needs was well above average. They have full access to the curriculum. They are taught in lessons alongside their peers and there is very little withdrawal for individual work.

Pupils from a minority ethnic heritage perform as well as their peers. They are integrated fully into the life of the school.³ Pupils identified as being gifted or talented also make good progress.

Pupils are skilled listeners and very articulate. The majority have advanced reading skills. Writing is usually accurate and well presented. Pupils have very good number skills and ICT skills. Attendance and punctuality are **very good**.

Boys' interest in school life is excellent as are their confidence and self-esteem. The impact of the school's provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision is **very good** and helps form this aspect of pupils' personal development very well. **Behaviour is very good**. Bullying or coercive behaviour in any form is not tolerated. Boys were very clear that the school took effective action if it occurred. **Overall, pupils display very good attitudes to school life, to learning and to each other.**

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall **very good quality of education** creates a powerful ethos for learning in the school. **The quality of teaching is good. It is very often very good.** It is characterised by excellent subject knowledge, high expectations and lessons that are stimulating and provide challenge and interest. Pupils develop good learning skills because of the consistency of high quality teaching. Homework is used successfully to extend the lessons.

The quality of the curriculum is very good enhanced by excellent enrichment opportunities: extra-curricular activities, the range of overseas trips and the contribution to the curriculum from within the local community.

The quality of care, support and advice to pupils is very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school has exceptional clarity of vision for its future development. The leadership by the headmaster is **outstanding**. Key members of staff support him very effectively and help drive the vision of the school's development forward so that **leadership across the school is very good, as**

³ Because of this, the report does not identify the achievement of pupils from minority ethnic heritage backgrounds separately in, for example, the subject sections of the report.

is management. Senior managers are very good role models to staff and pupils. **The governing body is very effective.** Strategic planning is excellent. **There is excellent commitment to**

supporting individual pupils. Finance is managed extremely well. Staff performance management is excellent and ensures very good staff development. The contribution of all staff, both teaching and support, is valued and effective.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Pupils' questionnaires (811 analysed) indicate that well over nine out of ten pupils think that this is a good school to be at, that they are taught well and that teachers expect them to work hard and do their best. Almost all **parents** of those who responded to the questionnaire (285 questionnaires returned) thought that staff expected their children to work hard and do their best, were making good progress and were being encouraged to become mature and independent. About a quarter of respondents thought that they were not kept well informed about how their child is getting on. The same proportion felt that the school did not seek the views of parents. A significant minority indicated that they did not feel comfortable approaching the school with a question, problem or complaint. The evidence suggests that the school does seek to work in partnership with parents. Reports to parents are regular but do not always inform the parents of what their child needs to do in order to improve- although this is clear to the pupils.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

Assessment in the school is good but could be refined and honed even further to raise standards even higher.

THE SIXTH FORM AT DEVONPORT HIGH SCHOOL

The sixth form⁴ has 246 students. It is larger than other sixth forms and has increased in size since the last inspection. Provision in the sixth form is enhanced by a very effective consortium partnership with local schools. At the end of Year 13, about 90 per cent of students continue their education at university.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is **highly successful** and has a well-deserved high reputation. Students achieved results that were well above average in 2002 and those standards were maintained in 2003.⁵

Teaching in the sixth form is very good and students **learn very effectively** as a result.

Students achieve well in relation to their standards on entry.⁶ The school is ambitious for its students and is continuously adding to an already rich programme of educational opportunities. Active partnerships at a national and international level contribute to a climate of intellectual challenge, industry and optimism.

The sixth form **is cost-effective.**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching, characterised by high levels of enthusiasm and expertise, leads to *very good standards and good achievement*.
- The very good range of courses and enrichment activities caters very well for students' high aspirations and needs, and reflects a deeply embedded culture of high expectations.
- Students are highly motivated and exemplify the school's powerful learning ethos: they articulate their views confidently, and are mature and very committed in their approach.
- Strong relationships underpin sixth form life: students value one another and benefit from excellent relationships with their teachers.

⁴ The term 'sixth form' is used because most parents understand it as a term used to describe post-16 education- Years 12 and 13. Similarly, although advanced level work is now broken down into two distinct stages-AS and A2, the term A level is sometimes used to describe advanced level work.

⁵ The sixth form provides a range of 31 courses leading to As-level and A2-level.

⁶ Students are required to achieve an average of 5.0 and a total of 50 points or more at GCSE before embarking on a programme leading to five AS-levels in Year 12, followed by A2-levels in at least three subjects in Year 13.

- Excellent levels of support ensure that students are fully integrated in a flourishing sixth form community that is a very good model of mutual co-operation and respect.
- Students have excellent attitudes to the sixth form and feel that they are treated as adults: they value the opportunities presented to become independent thinkers and to assume responsibilities within the school.

Since the last inspection the school has maintained the very good quality of education in the sixth form and the very good standards of attainment by students.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision⁷ 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>English: very good. Attainment is high and achievement is good, in response to very good teaching. Students express a great love for the subject, which is communicated to them by their teachers.</p> <p>French: good. Results are in line with national averages, and students achieve at least as well as those in similar schools. Numbers continuing to A-level have increased recently.</p> <p>German: good. As a result of well-organised and enthusiastic teaching, students make good progress. A-level take up is low in comparison with French.</p> <p>FLAW (Foreign Language at Work): good. The good achievement of students in this vocational course is greatly enhanced by their work experience in France.</p>
Mathematics	<p>Mathematics: very good. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge creates a very rich mathematical learning environment that enables students to achieve well. Very good teaching challenges students' mathematical thinking so that their understanding and learning are further extended.</p>
Science	<p>Biology: very good with some excellent features. Teaching, learning and assessment are of a very high quality. Standards are well above national expectations and well above those in similar selective schools. There is a trend of continuous improvement.</p> <p>Chemistry: very good with some excellent features. Standards, which are rising, are well above the average of national and selective schools. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is very high.</p> <p>Physics: very good with some excellent features. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is very high. Standards, which are rising, are well above the average of national and selective schools.</p>
Information and communication technology	<p>IT/Computing: very good. The AS and A2-level courses are well planned and presented. Students' achievement and attainment are very good.</p>
Humanities	<p>History: very good. Very good teaching and positive attitudes based on excellent relationships lead to very good attainment.</p>

⁷ 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 or colleges, 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.

	<p>Geography: very good. Teaching and learning are very good. Results at AS and A-level are well above average.</p> <p>Latin and Classical Civilisation: very good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and high expectations. There are very good relationships between teachers and students.</p> <p>Religious Education: very good. Students respond enthusiastically to an intellectually demanding course, which is very well taught. There is currently no provision at A2.</p>
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	<p>Design and technology: good. Students achieve well. Teaching and learning are good. Very good use is made of new technology, but student numbers are low.</p>
Visual and performing arts and media	<p>Art and Design: good. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers show enthusiasm and skills with students who respond very positively. There is a trend towards improvement, which is mirrored in the quality of work in progress.</p> <p>Drama: good. Skilled teaching and motivated students ensure that students attain high grades in their A2 examinations. Numbers are very low, which makes it more difficult to create a group dynamic.</p> <p>Media studies: good. Teaching is skilled and standards show a rising trend.</p> <p>Music: satisfactory. The quality of teaching and of standards is satisfactory overall.</p>
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	<p>Physical Education: excellent. Standards are well above the national average and above the average for selective schools. Teaching, based on outstanding knowledge, is excellent overall. Students make excellent progress and demonstrate very positive attitudes.</p>
Business	<p>Economics: very good. Students reach very high standards and achieve well over time. They enjoy the subject and take part in very good discussions that demonstrate a high level of understanding.</p> <p>Business Education: satisfactory. Standards and achievement are satisfactory. Students would benefit from more visitors and visits, and a range of teaching strategies that encourages independent research and active involvement in learning.</p>
Personal development and general programmes	<p>General studies: very good. Standards are very good, as is achievement. An excellent range of visiting speakers stimulates interest, as does the high quality of teaching.</p>

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'.

A number of the subjects identified above were sampled during the inspection rather than inspected fully.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Sixth form managers provide an excellent quality of support and guidance in Years 12 and 13. Information about sixth form courses is very good and students are very well prepared for the requirements of AS-level and A2-level courses. Students benefit from a diverse and extensive extra-curricular programme, which gives emphasis to the sciences, arts, music and sports. The quality of

advice offered in preparation for university entry is very good and students are well informed about careers opportunities. There are regular reporting and review procedures.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The head of sixth form is a dedicated professional. He leads a conscientious and committed team of sixth form managers. Planning for future developments, including that for the new consortium, is very good.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

205 students responded to the questionnaire. Almost all of those responding enjoyed being a student in the sixth form and thought teaching was challenging and that teachers were accessible and helpful if they had a problem with work. In discussion, students were very positive indeed about the sixth form, the range of subjects offered, the quality of teaching and the level of support they receive.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Pupils attain high standards in GCSE examinations: significantly above national averages in most subjects. Forty-two per cent of grades were A* or A. The average point score is below average for all selective schools, which includes boys' and girls' performance. Boys at Devonport perform broadly the same as boys in other selective schools. The school has targeted GCSE examinations for improvement.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall, given their capability, pupils achieve well to sustain very high standards in a broad range of subjects over the five years of compulsory education.
- The capped average point score (the average of pupils' best eight results) is below average for all selective schools, because not as many pupils gain eight A* to C grades. Currently 82 per cent of pupils in Year 11 gain eight A* to C grades. The school has set a demanding target of 95 per cent attaining this target in 2004.

Commentary

1. Standards of attainment on entry to the school are very high. Pupils make above average progress when compared to similar schools - that is, schools in which pupils in Year 7 had attained similar results in the National Curriculum tests in Year 6. By the end of Year 9 they attain results in the National Curriculum tests that are very high when compared to all schools and above average when compared to similar schools.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2002⁸

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	41.9 (40.9)	33.3 (33.0)
mathematics	46.7 (45.0)	34.7 (34.4)
science	44.2 (42.8)	33.3 (33.1)

There were 170 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. These results place the school in the top five per cent of schools nationally. When compared to similar schools, performance in English is average, mathematics above average and science well above average.
3. The upward trend in the school's average National Curriculum points in the Year 9 tests was above the national trend. The school in the recent past invested significant staff development time in adapting and using national strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 and this has resulted in improvements in the 'added value' that the school has made.

⁸ The last year for which there is comparative national data. National data quoted is for all schools and includes boys' and girls' performance. Boys' performance is roughly 3 points lower than girls' in English but broadly the same in mathematics and science.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2002⁹

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	98.1 (97.8)	49.9 (48.4)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	100 (100)	90.9 (90.9)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil	60.7 (61.8)	39.8(39)

There were 161 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. Results in GCSE in 2002 place the school in the top five per cent of schools. Results are below average compared to all other selective schools.
5. The percentage of pupils gaining 5 A* to C grades is above average compared to schools that achieved similar points scores in Year 9 National Curriculum tests. The percentage gaining 5 A* to G grades and 1 A* to G grade is very high compared to similar schools- in the top five per cent of schools nationally. The capped average point score (the average of pupils' best eight results) is below average because not as many pupils are gaining 8 A* to C grades.
6. In 2003 the school's overall percentage of A* and A grades was 42 per cent compared to the national boys' selective school average in 2002 of 44 per cent. The school's percentage at B grade is 31.7 per cent compared to 2002 figures of 29.9 per cent for boys' selective schools nationally. At C grade, the school gained 16.8 per cent compared to 18 per cent in 2002 for boys' selective schools nationally. Broadly, boys at Devonport are performing at a level similar to that of boys in selective schools nationally.
7. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress overall across the school. The overall attainment of pupils is well above national expectations. The school identifies around 20 pupils per year who demonstrate a significantly higher level of ability than most of their peers. Departments also identify pupils with significant talents in: physical activities; artistic areas; mechanical ingenuity; leadership and creativity. The school succeeds in creating an ethos where individuals can demonstrate their particular skills or aptitude. Boys are generous in their appreciation of others' skills. Their progress is monitored closely and they participate in special support learning programmes. The extra-curricular programme provides rich opportunities for these pupils to face additional challenges.
8. Pupils are skilled listeners and very confident speakers, articulate, able to make a presentation or argue a case with authority. They are consistently encouraged to answer questions in a formal register in full sentences. The majority have advanced reading skills, able to skim and scan, read at speed and digest information from a variety of sources and understand inferences. They are able to analyse and respond to texts with sensitive, perceptive insight. There are many opportunities for extended writing in most subjects. In English, their writing often displays maturity and sensitivity. Writing is usually accurate and well presented.
9. There are a number of factors which contribute and bring about the 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 the school has a high reputation for scholastic attainment and a powerful learning ethos to which they are expected contribute. Essentially, they make a commitment to the school- to its rules and expectations, reflected

⁹ The last year for which there are comparative national data. National data are for all schools- boys and girls. Boys nationally score approximately 2.5 points fewer than girls.

in the fact that many make the choice to travel significant distances to attend. Pupils respond to these challenges well because of the consistent good quality of teaching, and the challenge of a rich curriculum.

- A powerful element, although difficult to quantify, is the mutual support boys give to each other and the role models presented by older pupils and students.
- The fact that parents are very supportive and have high expectations for their sons.
- The commitment to ensuring pupils achieve their potential is at the heart of the school's ethos and the focus of the senior management team.

Standards achieved by students in the sixth form

10. Students enter the sixth form with well above average GCSE grades and sustain these high standards at A2/AS level. Students entering the sixth form are required to have an average of 5.0 points in their GCSEs and a total of at least 50 points.
11. In 2001 and 2002, results at A2 level were very high in comparison with the national average and within the range of the top 5 per cent of schools across the country. National comparators are not yet available for 2003. In 2002, the average point score by candidate at A2 level was 124 points¹⁰, above the national average, and 50 per cent of students attained A or B grades. In 2003, 54 per cent of students attained A or B grades at A2 level; and 48 per cent of students achieved A or B grades in 3 or more A2 levels. The average point score per entry rose from 84.5 in 2002 to 87.61 in 2003. The 2002 average point score per entry was significantly above the national average.
12. From lessons observed and the samples of work scrutinized, overall achievement is good. Achievement was very good in half the lessons seen. Students' work shows a very good response to teaching. In nine out of ten lessons, learning was good or better. It was never less than satisfactory. In well over half the lessons seen learning was very good and sometimes excellent.
13. Students' standards in both numeracy and literacy are very high, and overall communication skills are significantly above national expectations. Students are skilled listeners and authoritative speakers. They write with style and panache, and debate with confidence and conviction. Evidence from the inspection indicates that the independent use of ICT is very good. Sixth form students make very good use of the Internet for research and independent learning.

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	97.6 (98.1)	n/a (94.8)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	49.6 (54.3)	n/a (39.4)
Average point score per pupil	374.1 (323.1)	n/a (263.3)

There were 95 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Very positive attitudes to learning are sustained throughout the school. The standard of behaviour is very good and level of attendance is very high. All aspects of pupils' personal development, including the impact of the school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

¹⁰ This scoring system is used by the university clearing system (UCAS)

- Pupils' mature commitment to each other, to the school and to learning.
- Pupils' keenness to explore ideas, which is stimulated by teachers and their interest in the wide range of activities offered.
- Pupils' self confidence.
- There are no significant weaknesses.

Commentary

14. Pupils show considerable maturity as responsible members of a learning community. Typically they are well behaved, polite, courteous and considerate to other people. This produces a relaxed atmosphere where pupils get on very well with teachers and with one another. The school's use of rewards and sanctions supports this very good behaviour effectively and everyone is confident that any bullying is well handled. Mutual support and co-operation in lessons and in other activities such as sports teams, business enterprises or musical performances are very well developed. Families from a wide range of social circumstances are represented in the school but there is no endemic conflict between groups of pupils for this or other reasons. Racist attitudes are universally abhorred; the small number of pupils with minority ethnic backgrounds are fully integrated in their peer groups. The school takes very seriously its role of preparing pupils for life in a diverse multi-cultural society.
15. Lessons are an excellent working environment where boys allow themselves to become engrossed in the subject. Intellectual curiosity is encouraged by teachers and embraced by the boys. Debate, which explores everything from scientific or aesthetic concepts to school rules, is routine and promotes learning by the whole class. Pupils are confident of respect when responding to questions, so they are prepared to risk being wrong. They display profound intellectual curiosity and relish the opportunity to interrogate teachers for further detail or to test and probe ideas.
16. The very wide range of activities offered within and outside lessons provides excellent opportunities for boys to develop into fully rounded young adults. Their spiritual and moral development is exemplified and promoted by the high level of discussion and reflection, not only in religious education and English but also in many other subjects, and by pupils' willing engagement in so many and varied activities. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection. Numerous foreign visits and broad-based local collaborations bring valuable first-hand knowledge and cultural experience of the wider world into the school and prompt boys to express their concern for others either directly through supporting charities or more generally by participating in community projects such as Radical Art and Design. Such social experiences promote all aspects of pupils' personal development very effectively. The responsibility and hard work demonstrated by sixth form students shows that the school prepares them very well to play an active role in society.
17. Pupils and parents share an understanding of the importance of attendance so the rate of absence is well below the national average. There is no tradition of unpunctuality, despite the lengthy commuting necessary for many boys. This, and very high levels of extra-curricular participation, indicate the impressive commitment of pupils and their families to all the activities the school offers. The necessity to travel between sites for some courses does not have a major impact on the attendance of sixth form students. The school manages very effectively all aspects of recording and the encouragement of good attendance.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.5	School data	0.1

National data	7.8
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National data	1.2
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The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Exclusions

18. Fixed period exclusions are used by the school as a short sharp shock for serious breaches of school rules and to involve parents in discussion about their son's future behaviour. They are appropriate and properly handled. Almost no pupils are excluded more than once, indicating the success of the strategy.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	575	31	0
White – Irish	3	0	0
White – any other White background	7	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	5	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	7	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	4	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Chinese	7	0	0
Any other ethnic group	4	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	448	0	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 are excellent. Students identified closely with the school and spoke very highly of the support they receive in the sixth form.
20. Students are ambitious to succeed. They possess very good study skills and can be relied upon to work conscientiously at home and at school. Overall, sixth form students display well above average levels of maturity and self-motivation. Although reflective in approach, they are self-assured and demonstrate an easy confidence in their own abilities. Sharing a keen sense of direction, students work purposefully, either independently or in collaboration with other students. They show a mature, easy camaraderie working alongside female students in the mixed classes.
21. The very good levels of support offered by teachers help students to broaden their intellectual horizons and to enhance their personal learning skills. Exceptionally secure relationships, lead to impressive levels of loyalty, openness and commitment. Students are proud of their school and their own involvement in a long established tradition of high academic achievement.

22. The sixth form is a well-ordered place with an international outlook. Much is done to extend the boundaries of knowledge and understanding through national and international links with schools, industry and higher education organisations. The school's specialist engineering status has led to the enhancement of several of these partnerships, including the provision of university master classes.
23. The personal development of students is very good. Students may choose to assume responsibilities and to contribute to the development of the whole school. In addition to initiating and organising whole school events, sixth formers are involved in a range of extra-curricular activities including Young Enterprise, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and primary school placements. Students relate very well to one another and work cooperatively to organise events and activities.
24. A very good range of activities is open to students, especially in the domains of science, the expressive arts and sports. Many sixth formers contribute to sports teams, drama productions, concerts and other school events including overseas tours. Each year, sixth formers participate in a range of educational visits including residential courses at Uzel, the school's study centre in Brittany. Students regularly represent the city, county, region and country in sports, debating, music and drama. Overall, sixth form students provide excellent role models to other pupils by contributing wholeheartedly to the life of the school.
25. Students are very well prepared for higher education by the time they leave the school. Approximately, 90 per cent of students gain university places each year.
26. Overall attendance is very good, and this accurately reflects the zeal and commitment to learning shown by students.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Pupils achieve well because they develop good learning skills derived from consistent good quality teaching. Teaching is good and often very good. The curriculum provided by the school is very good and suits the boys' needs very well. In addition the school takes very good care of its pupils.

Teaching and learning

Teaching is good. It is often very good. Good teaching is seen in all subjects.

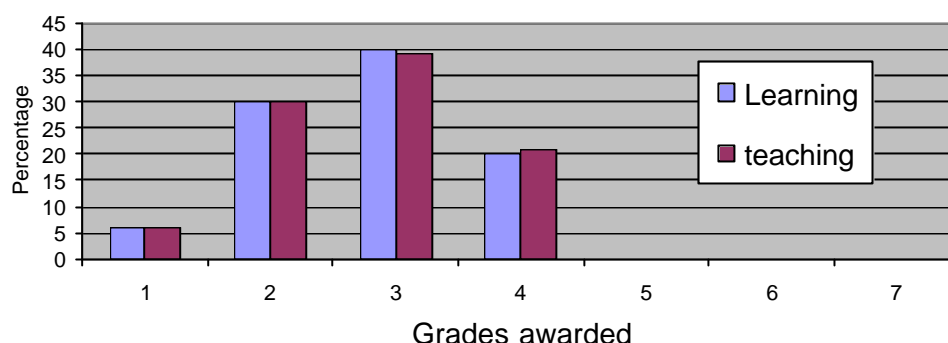
Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent subject knowledge, high expectations and challenging lessons ensure that pupils develop good learning skills. Above all, members of staff display a commitment to the boys' success.
- Assessment, overall, is good but needs refining.
- The good provision for pupils with special educational needs could be refined further.

Commentary

27. In eight out of ten lessons seen across the main school, the quality of learning taking place within the lesson was good or better. Learning was never less than satisfactory. Learning was very good in four out of ten lessons. It was on occasions excellent. In the lessons seen there was a very close match between the quality of learning and the quality of teaching as

Teaching and learning grades expressed as a percentage for the main school (Years 7 to 11)



indicated by the chart above.

28. Pupils have good independent learning skills. This means that they add value to the lessons. They listen well to each other and their teachers, focus on the task in hand and show good concentration. They make connections between what has been studied in one area to another. They work at their best when they are fully and actively engaged in the activity and demonstrate very good co-operative skills. This is recognised well by teachers who generally ensure in their planning that there is a good range of activities in order to maintain the interest and commitment of pupils. Lessons usually have clear objectives for the learning to take place. When learning objectives are explained, boys know what to expect and what is expected of them, showing enthusiasm to do their very best and make good progress. Particularly good use is made in some subjects, such as science, of target setting related to grade or level criteria. The work carried out by the school in using national strategies to enhance teaching in Years 7 to 9 means that many teachers have a good understanding of the three-part lesson- particularly finding the initial 'hook' to engage the pupils in the particular task and showing how the specific objectives of the lesson relate to what they have learnt previously.
29. Teachers have high expectations and excellent subject knowledge. This gives them to confidence to question very effectively, lead more open ended discussions which make pupils think hard and refine their ideas. Pupils are not allowed to think in a sloppy manner; they are asked to rephrase colloquial language into a more formal register, using correct terminology. Pupils also listen carefully to the ideas of their peers and this powerful support for learning is used well by many staff when groups are given specific tasks or asked to formulate their ideas in order, for example, to give a presentation.
30. Along with excellent subject knowledge is the ability that many staff have of communicating their enthusiasm and passion for the subject that demands a commitment from the boys. Homework is used effectively to extend the learning taking place in the classroom.
31. The key characteristics of the good and often very good teaching seen are:
 - Excellent subject knowledge.
 - High expectations of what the pupils can achieve.
 - Clear objectives.
 - Sharply focused planning.
 - Brisk pace.
 - Enthusiasm for the subject.
 - Very good relationships between pupils and the teacher.
 - A powerful learning ethos, which demands that pupils make a contribution, where mistakes are used productively and when different viewpoints are valued.
 - Active, varied strategies that engage and stimulate the pupils.

32. Pupils with special educational needs usually work in their class group, and are only very occasionally withdrawn for specific individual or small group tuition in basic skills. In most mainstream lessons seen, pupils made good gains in knowledge and understanding. In lessons seen, attainment against national expectations for pupils with special educational needs was well above average. Overall there is good provision for these pupils, although aspects could be refined. All heads of department have copies of individual education plans. However, individual education plans do not always provide sufficiently clear targets for pupils and the range of information relating to strategies and approaches is limited. Teachers sometimes identify pupils with special educational needs in their lesson planning adapting teaching strategies or resources when teachers feel that there is a requirement to respond to individual needs.
33. Some pupils resist the efforts of the learning support assistant to help them. Although the learning support assistant is aware of the needs of the pupils she is supporting she is not always able to provide the level of help or direction required. The use of learning support assistants in the classroom, working alongside teaching colleagues, is relatively new to the school. Currently there is insufficient planning for lessons between subject teachers and the learning support assistant, and valuable opportunities for full involvement of the learning support teacher, for example in team teaching, are lost. In this way the efficacy of support is reduced. Senior management need to monitor the use of the learning support assistant in order to ensure best use is made of her time.
34. The school's overall procedures for assessment in Years 7 to 11 are good. Pupils' work is marked thoroughly and regularly, in accordance with the school's policy, and pupils are usually given a clear indication of how well they are doing. There is very good practice in science and geography, where attainment grades are used consistently and pupils are provided with clear criteria to explain the grades. In many subjects teachers provide constructive advice to pupils, on written work as well as in class, on how to improve the standard of their work. There are some inconsistencies in English, mathematics and history, where teachers do not always provide specific comments that make clear their expectations of pupils. The majority of pupils indicated in a recent survey that their work was marked helpfully in most subjects.
35. Whilst assessment systems are good they could be refined further to ensure that teachers and subject leaders throughout the school use data more systematically to:
- evaluate the progress of individual pupils and whole teaching groups;
 - set specific subject targets for improvement;
 - modify the planning of their teaching or of the subject curriculum.
- It is difficult for subject staff to do this currently because assessment data are not automatically provided to them sorted by subject teaching group. There is also insufficient access by subject staff to data held centrally on computers, to enable them to extract the data they need or to add their own data to the database.
36. Most pupils understand how well they are doing at school and how they can improve. In many subject areas, teachers have displayed descriptions of what pupils need to do to achieve National Curriculum levels or examination grades. There is good practice in science, information communication technology and design and technology, where pupils are fully aware of level and grade descriptions; they are provided with detailed evaluations of their progress in the subject. In English and mathematics, pupils are less aware of their level of attainment and what they need to do to improve.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 162 lessons across Years 7 to 13

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
15 (9%)	60 (37%)	58 (36%)	29 (18%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

37. 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.

Sixth form

38. The overall standard of teaching and learning in the sixth form is very good. In six out of ten lessons teaching and learning were very good or better.
39. Teachers plan well and set clear objectives for their students. They use their own excellent subject expertise most effectively to motivate students. Tasks are challenging and provide very good opportunities for students to develop their independent learning and research skills.
40. Excellent classroom relationships with groups of students underpin the best teaching seen in the sixth form. Students make good gains in knowledge and understanding because lessons provide them with the opportunity to work through their own hypotheses and ideas. Many sixth form lessons resemble the best adult teaching and learning, with teachers and students engaged in critical discussion on an equal basis. The adult nature of relationships encourages students to exercise a high level of responsibility for their work.
41. Teachers' high expectations of what students should achieve inspire students to make substantial intellectual and creative effort. A significant feature of students' learning is their deep-seated interest in, and active engagement with, the subjects they are studying. Homework is set regularly and well planned to extend and consolidate classroom learning.
42. Teachers know their students very well and are very eager for them to succeed. Where opportunities arise, they invest significant time in continuing academic discussions outside lessons.
43. Based on the student questionnaire and inspectors' discussions with students, it is clear that students consider that teaching is both challenging and demanding. They particularly value the impressive expertise of their teachers and their readiness to offer individual help and advice.
44. Assessment is used effectively to ensure that students are clear about the standard of their work and what they must do in order to attain the highest grades. The procedures for assessment in the sixth form are good. Students' work is marked thoroughly and regularly, in accordance with the school's policy, and students are usually given a clear indication of how well they are doing. In many subjects, teachers provide constructive advice to students on written work on how to improve the standard of their work. They also give students very good specific guidance in lessons. There is very good practice in geography where assessment of extended writing is closely related to the requirements of the A2/AS level examinations. The great majority of students indicated in a recent survey that their work was marked helpfully in most subjects.
45. Most sixth form students have a very good understanding of how well they are doing in the sixth form and how they can improve in their subjects. There is good practice, for example, in mathematics where A/AS level students are well aware of their target grades based on prior attainment at GCSE. In many subject areas, students' understanding of their learning needs is

enhanced by teachers who give them individual time and attention to discuss their progress in relatively small teaching groups. There is a good system of reporting to parents, including parents' evenings.

The curriculum

The school provides very good learning opportunities across Years 7 to 13. The curriculum is broad, and ensures very good continuity and coherence for students of differing aptitudes and abilities. It prepares them very well for their academic and personal development, with a growing emphasis on their role as adults in society.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Curriculum leadership, innovation and development are strengths within the school.
- The expanding curriculum development, and continuity for students aged 14 to 19, provides very well for the students' different and varied needs.
- Very good extra-curricular opportunities are strongly supported by students, and are helping to maintain and improve standards.

Commentary

46. The curriculum provided for years 7 to 11 is very good and all the statutory requirements are properly met. Recent evaluation of the curriculum has coincided with the school's successful designation as a specialist engineering college. This has provided substantial impetus for improvements that are both innovative and exciting. Priority has been given to establishing a continuity of opportunity for pupils aged 14 to 19. Progress has been rapid in setting up a flexible structure that widens the pupils' opportunities within, and beyond, the school.
47. In Years 7 to 9 the curriculum is very good and includes all the National Curriculum subjects as well as religious education, drama and personal social and health education (PSHE), including citizenship. As part of their language entitlement, all pupils take Latin and French in Year 7 and French and German and Latin in Years 8 and into Year 9 within an option. These are effective arrangements with good continuity into Years 10 and 11. Recent innovations include the introduction of aspects of engineering into mathematics, science and design and technology. In Years 10 and 11, all students follow a core of English, mathematics and science, together with ICT, religious education and physical education. Pupils are then able to choose from a good range of academic options. Last year the school was able to allocate all students to their first choice subjects, ensuring their individual interests and needs were met. Pupils with special educational needs have full access to the curriculum. They are taught in lessons with their peers with very little withdrawal for individual work. The special educational needs co-ordinator organises support for National Curriculum tests, GCSEs and A levels. Where appropriate this may include special arrangements with the examination boards.
48. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. The curriculum has been refined in response to pupils' views and now incorporates valuable and much appreciated expert input from beyond the school staff. The range of topics covered is appropriate and supports pupils' personal development well by dealing with familiar personal issues such as bullying, as well as health, drugs and sex education, including same sex relationships, along with issues of global concern. Provision for citizenship is good. It is supported by the school's ethos and the fact that other subjects contribute towards pupils' understanding of this new subject.
49. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is very good. The level of subject qualification and expertise is excellent. Members of the technical staff undertake a valuable role in assisting and supporting teachers. The secretarial, clerical and site management staff make a significant contribution to the smooth day-to-day running of the school. Resources are satisfactory overall but there is insufficient access to computers in all subjects. This is picked up in some subject reports. The issue is not so much to do with the

number of computers in the school but the question of how the subject departments access the computer suites, often in a separate building. The school is currently tackling this issue of access by the installation of a wireless network. Accommodation is satisfactory overall, with further building work already underway.

50. The school provides an extremely extensive and varied range of extra-curricular activities. The schedule of school trips offers opportunities for students to travel to Europe and beyond in order to extend their learning. During the inspection a group departed for a 10-day trip to Kenya and another was preparing for an art trip to Florence, whilst the classics department were running a trip to Greece. The art department also runs visits to London galleries and other European venues. The school has its own house in Brittany which offers all Year 7 students the opportunity to experience French life and many return with the school in subsequent years. Sixth form students have very good opportunity to do work experience in Europe. Music trips for choirs and bands extend to Russia, Spain, Holland and Italy. Sporting opportunities are excellent and members of staff are fully committed to providing full fixtures for teams in all major activities. Studies in history are enhanced by trips, with one being planned to visit China in 2004. Theatre trips and productions are annual events on the calendar for English and drama students. There is an extensive list of clubs for students during and after school, which include drama and debating clubs and enrichment in engineering. The school provides students with very good opportunities to take part in Outdoor Education activities, including teams in the Ten Tors challenge, and the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.

Sixth form

51. The curricular provision for the sixth form is very good. The selection of subjects is well matched to the current students' aspirations and needs. The new consortium arrangements have extended the choice of subjects, and the diversity of syllabi, offered at AS-level and A2-level.
52. All students follow an A-level course in general studies, which adds further breadth to their sixth form experience. In addition, students benefit from programmes in physical education and personal, social and health education. A FLAW (Foreign Language at Work) course is also offered.
53. Good provision is made for the development of key skills and standards are well above average. All students have the opportunity to refine their communication and use of number skills through general studies, tutorials and their subject courses. Access to ICT is currently variable in subjects across the curriculum because of the reasons stated previously. However, students' independent work demonstrates that they are competent, autonomous users of ICT. The school is ready to innovate in response to changing circumstances as illustrated by the development of systems engineering at A-level.
54. Provision for moral, spiritual, social and cultural development through different subject areas, the tutorial programme, general studies course and the full range of enrichment opportunities, including visiting speakers, is very good.
55. A strength of the curriculum is the excellent range of extra-curricular activities offered both in and out of school hours. The school places great importance on participation in sport and extra-curricular activities and works hard to extend and develop the quality of enrichment opportunities that is offered.

Care, guidance and support

The school takes very good care of pupils. Very good academic and personal support and guidance are provided. There are very good systems for ensuring boys' health and safety.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff care deeply about pupils and their needs.
- Teachers make themselves readily available for pupils to seek support.
- Advice about courses and careers is of high quality.

Commentary

56. Despite the high number of primary schools involved, pupils are inducted well into the school and soon settle into its culture of relaxed and friendly productivity. This underpins their blossoming confidence; it also applies to those who join the school later, in the sixth form. Young pupils who have been at the school for only a few weeks see older boys as friendly and supportive both in formal positions, such as supervisors of the homework club, and more casually.
57. At whole-school level, very good use is made of national assessment information and data for similar schools to support the process of setting of targets for all pupils in their subjects. Systematic use is made of the national *Mid Years Information System* (MIDYIS), to predict achievement in the National Curriculum subjects at the end of Year 9. A comprehensive database has been established centrally, containing current and predicted attainment data for every pupil in every subject. In addition, the school has rigorous procedures for collecting effort grades on a regular basis from all subjects; and this data is also held centrally. This entire database is kept up to date very efficiently. Data within year groups on pupils' progress is published regularly and is used particularly well by heads of year and form tutors. The school has made good use of additional funding to finance increased non-contact time for heads of year to undertake this work. Members of the pastoral staff use the information to praise pupils who are doing well and to arrange target-setting meetings with pupils and their parents where progress is unsatisfactory.
58. Teachers go out of their way to provide academic support: for example they willingly devote time during lunch or after school to any boy who requests assistance, having not fully understood an explanation in class. They take a very close interest in the academic and personal progress of all their pupils. Their very good knowledge of pupils' progress in subjects is enabled by the extensive assessment procedures. Form tutors develop very good relationships with pupils. The quality of these relationships informs the detailed discussion of personal issues such as pupils' attitudes or behaviour that take place regularly at meetings with other pastoral staff.
59. Pupils' views are solicited by the school through formal consultations and through 'Transforming Learning' procedures that have a direct impact on the teaching they receive, for example by reforming the way the personal, social and health education curriculum is taught. The boys also have a voice through the school council which is currently refining its electoral system and preparing to raise its profile in order to enhance its standing within the school community. Discussion during, and surveys before, the inspection show that pupils understand precisely the school's expectations and ethos. They recognise and appreciate the availability of staff for academic and personal support and felt they could approach them. They were aware of the counselling opportunities available, including confidential access to the school nurse. They appreciate the very good guidance they receive about course and career options, which includes the full use of the Connexions service.

60. Support and guidance for pupils with special educational needs is comprehensive. They are provided with the same support and guidance as other pupils. There are good links with external agencies.
61. Attention to health & safety issues is thoroughly planned in lessons such as physical education and science; it is very good in preparation for school trips. Pupils are made aware of dangers and safe working practices. Procedures for ensuring child protection are sound. Appropriate procedures for pupils who are taken ill or need medication are in place and are supported by well-qualified staff. The school has received a Healthy Schools Award.

Sixth form

62. The school provides very good support and guidance for its students. The excellent relationships within the sixth form are a significant factor in the support the students receive. The advice given by teachers and tutors is based on substantial personal knowledge of each student. Students are kept well informed of their progress and find their tutors and teachers very accessible.
63. The school provides good information about the courses available in the sixth form. Students find the printed information covering sixth form subjects and courses clear, accurate and helpful.
64. The information and guidance received about future careers are very good. An initiative within this is the Insight Programme, which brings together employers, higher education and the consortium schools to offer students insight into the range of undergraduate courses and post-university destinations. In addition, selected students regularly take part in range of higher education activities including Villier's Park placements and pre-university medical and veterinary conferences. The quality of guidance offered in respect of higher education is very good.
65. Very good use is made of national assessment information to calculate targets for all sixth form students in their subjects. Systematic use is made of the national *A level Information System* (ALIS), to predict achievement at A2 level. The features of the main school's assessment system are used in the sixth form in that a comprehensive database has been established centrally, containing current and predicted attainment data for every sixth form student in every subject. In addition, the sixth form has rigorous procedures for collecting effort grades on a regular basis from all subjects; and these data are held centrally and kept up to date very efficiently. Data within year groups on students' progress is published regularly and is used particularly well by the head of sixth form, and tutors who conduct individual discussions with all students in their tutor groups on a rolling programme, to monitor progress. As with the main school there would be greater use of assessment for learning if the school ensured that assessment information was more consistently used in subject areas to raise standards. In particular, subject staff could make more use of value-added data and data comparing students achievement with that in other subjects. Sixth form teachers currently do not have convenient access to assessment information held centrally on computers, to enable them to extract the data they need or to add their own data to the database.
66. The school has very good links with other schools, especially those in the consortium, and contributes actively to a significant number of wider partnerships. Links with the city of Plymouth at business, social and charitable levels are good.
67. Arrangements for ensuring students' health and safety are very good. There are appropriate procedures in place for monitoring their attendance and punctuality.
68. The level of individual support and guidance provided to students is a key strength of the school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Parents and the school work together effectively. Parents are mostly well informed about the school and their children's progress. Excellent relationships with businesses and the community and very good partnerships with other educational institutions bring major benefits for the boys.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's engineering college status brings many benefits.
- Some weakness in reporting pupils' progress to parents.
- Mutually supportive relationships with other schools.
- Extensive valuable visits and visitors.

Commentary

69. Parents express support for most aspects of the school. They are happy with the standard of teaching and leadership, and they particularly appreciate the way the school encourages the personal, as well as academic, development of their sons. A significant minority of those who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire felt they would like more information about their sons' progress and some were not comfortable approaching the school or satisfied by the extent to which the school responded to their views.
70. Very good information about the school is provided in well-presented prospectuses and other documents and through an unusually rich website. Parents receive useful interim reports, which inform them about their sons' efforts, followed by more extensive annual reports that indicate targets as well as standards reached in each subject. This information is valuable but too often teachers' comments concentrate on attitudinal matters rather than describing what the boy has learned, and they rarely indicate precisely what he should do to improve. While citizenship is taught very effectively, the reporting of it comprises only a list of topics.
71. Inspection findings show the school is open to approaches and attends to them with good will. Planners are one effective channel of communication; another is through governors who make particular efforts to approach parents during consultation evenings. A tea party is organised to engage new parents and encourage them to access mutual support as well as dealing directly with the school. Good efforts are made to communicate with and involve parents at the governors' annual meeting and through the parent teacher association, which has been very supportive of school resources, for example by buying a minibus last year.
72. There are very good links with many schools in the city, which help with induction, expand the horizons of all the pupils involved and increase the resources available to them: for example, some pupils produced science boxes for primary schools and primary pupils had useful access to this school's design and technology workshops. The consortium arrangements for sixth form courses are effective. A large number of visitors, such as local artists and police, share their expertise and experience with pupils. The engineering college status has started to bring further tangible benefits through fruitful co-operation and collaboration with other schools, and many businesses are actively involved through direct financial support or by sharing expertise and resources. Many boys benefit from the school's base in France and from a very rich range of visits to countries around the world.

Sixth form

73. Parents expressed very positive views about the education their sons receive in the sixth form. Communications are good. Meetings are held regularly and parents receive a good level of information about sixth form events.

74. Students are very positive about the sixth form. They feel that they are very well taught and that the courses provided respond to their needs. They appreciate the importance and impact of the excellent relationships within the sixth form. They are very pleased with the level of individual help and encouragement they receive from their teachers. They also welcome the opportunities provided to initiate and exercise responsibility. Overall, students value highly their experience in the sixth form.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is very good as is management across the school. Governance of the school is very effective.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Outstanding leadership by the headmaster who is supported very effectively by key staff.
- Management across the school is very good.
- The governing body is very effective.
- The needs of the individual pupils and a deep commitment to enabling them to fulfil their potential are at the heart of the school's ethos and the focus of the school's leadership.

Commentary

75. The governing body is very effective. There is a very wide spread of personal and professional expertise on the governing body. Many have long standing connections with the school. They play a full part in shaping the direction of the school and contribute to the school development plan. They have a clear understanding of their role as non-executive directors. They have a very good understanding of the strengths of the school and what it needs to do in order to develop further. Relationships between the governing body and the senior management team are very good and they provide both very effective support and challenge.
76. The leadership of the headmaster is outstanding. The school's clarity of vision stems from him. He is passionately committed to the pupils, knows them, monitors their progress and enjoys their success. His commitment and skills of delegation breed in turn an equal commitment from staff. Communication is open, information shared and core values of courtesy, respect and non-coercive management mean that teams are effective. His perspective is outward, beyond the walls of the school into the community and beyond, and also forward into the future. The drive for engineering specialist status is a reflection of this perspective. However, he is also equally concerned about ensuring that other curriculum areas, such as the arts and classics are kept central to the work of the school. He is ambitious for the school, he wants to see it house a range of centres of excellence to the pupils' benefit but is equally committed to sharing expertise and resources within the local community of schools as an active partner rather than simply as a benefactor.
77. A team of senior colleagues support him very effectively and help drive the vision forward so that leadership across the school is very good. Key members of staff play a major role in motivating and influencing staff and pupils and creating and working within very effective teams. All subscribe to the vision of the school, which puts the concerns for the needs of individual pupils at the heart of what the school is about. Strategic planning is excellent and across the school there is the feeling that the school has a sense of purpose, a dynamic sense of direction and a commitment to improvement based on very good evaluative systems. Teamwork, staff loyalty and their often very significant commitment of their own time and emotional investment in the school is valued; and yet at the same time there is genuine support for trying to keep a balance between work and home, between giving out and having enough opportunities to re-charge.

78. Management across the school is very good. The school functions very well on a day-to-day basis. Peer review, self-evaluation, faculty evaluations are part of a professionalism of approach apparent in the school. There is scope for the development of guidelines for the use of support staff in the classroom and monitoring of the use of the partnership between learning support assistant and teaching colleagues as well as refining individual education plans. Currently there is no timetable of regular meetings to review pupils' progress between the special educational needs co-ordinator and key staff. Subjects are held to account for the standards they achieve but the accountability is founded on strong supportive mechanisms. Staff performance management is excellent.
79. At senior management level the analysis of performance data and the use of assessment data are very good- and, across the school and, it is good. The school makes use of national data on attainment to monitor its performance against national averages and against similar schools. Effective use is also made of predictive data, to measure the performance of individuals and groups in relation to their prior attainment. The management of finance and resources benefits from the school's use of financial data and benchmarks, provided by the local education authority and by the government. Performance data are widely published within the school and are presented on a regular basis to the governing body. The school has taken effective action to improve provision in the light of performance data, for example financing the introduction of heads of year posts in order to raise standards. Steps are now being taken to ensure that performance data are used more effectively to monitor and evaluate performance within subject areas.
80. The induction of all staff new to the school and in particular of newly qualified teachers is very good. There is a weekly programme of training sessions that is planned and published in advance, although it is perfectly possible for this to be adapted to respond to changing needs. Newly qualified members of staff speak enthusiastically of the support they are given by their mentors and the opportunities they are given to attend useful courses and meetings.
81. The continuing professional development of staff is very good. Members of the support staff also receive training, indeed they would like more and they are given the opportunity to participate fully in appropriate staff training days in school. Professional development is focused clearly on the needs of the school as identified in the development plan and on the targets identified through performance management. Very good comprehensive records are kept and there are very clear expectations and arrangements for staff who have received any form of training to disseminate what they have learned to their colleagues. In-service training is provided to prepare staff for the arrival of pupils with specific additional needs. The school's contribution to initial teacher training is very good. There are good links with local teacher training establishments and there are high levels of co-operation. Students who are in the course of their training express thorough satisfaction with the support they are given by the school and the range of experience they are given.
82. The management of the school's finances and resources is very effective. Through very careful budgeting and efficient use of grant funding, the school has very successfully addressed its main educational priorities. It has, for example secured a new sports hall, a refectory and significant new facilities for science, design and technology and music. Although the achievement of specialist school status is bringing further benefits in technology, science and mathematics, the school has been careful to provide additional resources to arts subjects such as media studies, art and drama. Further improvements are planned in humanities and modern foreign languages.
83. Expenditure on staffing is monitored very carefully to meet the needs of the curriculum. Imaginative collaborative arrangements with other providers and careful monitoring of group sizes have ensured that the sixth form is cost effective. Management of day-to-day finance and resources by support staff is very efficient. The few issues raised in the auditor's report on school finances have been comprehensively dealt with.

84. The school very successfully ensures that the principles of best value are central to its management and use of resources. Requests for expenditure are subjected to challenge and there are high expectations on subject areas to achieve high standards with their resources. Comparisons are routinely made against benchmarks from the local education authority and other specialist schools. The school's academic board is actively consulted on expenditure levels in subject areas. The school has rigorous procedures to ensure that value for money is achieved by securing competitive quotes, and tenders where appropriate, for all major expenditure items.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,620,327	Balance from previous year	24,621
Total expenditure	3,598,790	Balance carried forward to the next	21,537
Expenditure per pupil	3388		

Sixth form

85. The senior leadership of the school provides a clear educational vision for the development of the sixth form, which is reflected in the pursuit of academic excellence and the drive to maximise educational opportunities.
86. The quality of leadership in the sixth form is very good. The sixth form leadership team made up of the head of sixth, the heads of year and the sixth form tutors ensure that daily administrative arrangements, systems and procedures work very well. The head of sixth has also assumed responsibility for the effective administration of the school's involvement in the new Link Partnership.
87. The sixth form is a very important part of the school as a whole. Students are known well individually and benefit from excellent levels of personal support. Sixth form managers are open, accessible and very generous with time. They balance professionalism with a genuine interest in their students. The calendar of the sixth form activities is full and eclectic in character. Sixth form managers work hard to enhance the intellectual and social development of the students. The school sustains very successfully an ethos of intellectual enquiry and open-mindedness. In a large community, students openly value their peers and show genuine respect for the views and achievements of others.
88. Students value the right to be considered for prefect status. They take their duties seriously and contribute very effectively to a range of school events and, in general, to the very good organisation of the school.
89. In the questionnaire, an overwhelming number of students said they would recommend the sixth form. Those students joining the school in Year 12 are provided with very good support. Induction arrangements are very good.
90. The school's strategies for monitoring and evaluating sixth form performance are good. Overall, planning for change and improvement and evaluation of outcomes are effective in ensuring the continued progress of the sixth form.
91. Funding is used in a cost-effective way to give students a very good curriculum and very good quality of teaching.

Resources

92. Staffing arrangements are very good. Overall the number of teachers is in good proportion to the number of sixth form students. The expertise and experience of teachers are very well suited to the demands of sixth form teaching. Teachers are deployed effectively to provide a rich and varied curriculum.
93. Students have satisfactory, if worn and uninspiring, common room space, which is soon to be up-graded. Study facilities, including the library, are just satisfactory but planned improvements, which include a dedicated study centre, will greatly enhance current provision. Students are able to access computers, and the Internet, for independent study. Overall, the sixth form is well resourced with learning materials.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH, MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND LATIN

English

The provision¹¹ in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment is very high and achievement is good.
- Teaching is consistently at least good and some is very good.
- There are high levels of expectation and challenge.
- Pupils are offered good support to further raise attainment.
- There is some inconsistency in the way in which the application of department policies is monitored.
- There are insufficient opportunities to share good practice within the department, especially by observing the teaching colleagues.

Commentary

94. Pupils enter the school with attainment that is very high in comparison with the national average, although not as high as their attainment in mathematics and science. They achieve well in comparison with their previous attainment, to reach standards which are very high by the end of Year 9. Their progress is particularly good in the quality of description and detail in their personal and extended writing. Pupils develop a rich vocabulary, which they use with increasing maturity in their writing and speaking. They make good progress in the quality of their response to literature and in their attitude to reading as a worthwhile leisure pursuit.
95. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2002 were very high and represented maintenance of the high standards of the previous year. The percentage of pupils attaining A*-C grades was much higher than is seen nationally and the percentage of pupils who reached the two highest grades A*-A was also very high. The percentage of A*-A was higher than the average for boys' selective schools. The results for English literature were also higher than nationally and in boys' selective schools. Analysis of work completed by the previous as well as current Year 11 indicates that standards are well above what is seen nationally.
96. Pupils enter Year 10 with attainment that is very high and they achieve well, in response to good and sometimes very good teaching to maintain these standards. They make especially good progress in the development of a sensitive and well-informed response to literature. They develop a mature, fluent and frequently adventurous written style. They are articulate and listen well and therefore make good use of the many opportunities that are offered for discussion in order to enhance their progress. They develop an already wide vocabulary and make good progress in the use of appropriate, correct and precise terminology.
97. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. All teaching seen was at least good, with examples in lessons observed and in the pupils' work of some very good teaching. Lessons are planned and resourced well. Teaching includes, generally, a good range of activities that maintain great interest and commitment in the pupils. In a small minority of lessons pupils are expected to sit

¹¹ 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.

for protracted periods of time, either listening or carrying out tasks that are not sufficiently varied. Lessons have clear objectives for the learning to take place, although these are not always explicitly shared with the pupils. When learning objectives are explained, boys know what to expect and what is expected of them, showing enthusiasm to do their very best and make good progress. Teachers have high expectations and excellent subject knowledge and offer considerable challenge, making very good use of questioning and discussion to make pupils think hard and refine their ideas. Pupils respond to this very well, developing the ability to explain their ideas articulately and to learn by considering carefully the ideas of others. There are very good relationships between teachers and pupils and amongst the boys themselves, which encourages open dialogue. Generally good use is made of target setting and in advising pupils how to meet these targets, so that in general pupils understand their targets and are ambitious about meeting them. There is some lack of consistency in the thoroughness with which work is marked, with some marking offering insufficient guidance on what pupils need to do to improve.

98. Overall, leadership and management are good. Leadership is very good. There is a strong commitment to raising attainment still further by maximising the potential of each pupil. There are good procedures in place to identify the danger of underachievement in individual pupils or to identify pupils who show particularly strong potential. There is a good system of offering additional lessons to those who would benefit from them, either by offering support when it is required or by offering additional challenge to higher attaining pupils. There is a strong sense of team spirit and collaborative working among the members of the English department. There is insufficient monitoring of the consistency with which department policies are applied. There is a good programme of curricular enrichment and extra-curricular activities. There are many examples of good practice in the department but insufficient opportunity to share this on a structured basis, especially by observing the teaching of colleagues.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

99. The use of literacy skills across the curriculum is very good throughout the school. In all subjects the use of discussion is a strong feature of learning. Boys have a rich general and subject specific vocabulary in all subjects. Pupils have plenty of opportunity, for example in religious education, to make use of a range of extended writing. In some subjects, for example history, boys show a real “appetite” for writing and tackle writing tasks enthusiastically. Pupils in the sixth form make effective use of writing to explore and explain their response to their work; for example, in art their writing arises from fluent and informed discussion of their response to the art they study.

Latin

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils reach good standards and achieve well.
- Teachers have an excellent grasp of the subject and know the students well.
- They take great care over pronunciation of Latin, providing a very good model for students.
- Pupils get too little opportunity to speak or read Latin aloud during lessons.
- Teachers need to make more use of visual aids to reinforce pupils’ recall of grammatical endings etc.

Commentary

100. The standards attained by Year 8 pupils are good, as are those by pupils in Year 11. Younger pupils have a good knowledge 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 broadly in line with those seen nationally in similar schools, although in recent years there has been a smaller proportion of pupils attaining A and A* grades than in similar schools. This is similar to the situation at the last inspection.

101. Pupils make good progress in Latin and each year group has an appropriate range of material to study. All pupils take Latin in Years 7 and 8. At the beginning of Year 9 about a quarter continue the subject, and about one-in-five choose it as a GCSE option. Pupils in Year 11 translate from Latin with some fluency and an awareness that translations need to be in idiomatic English. However, some lack a secure grasp of basic grammatical points, especially the endings of the noun cases. This reflects the uneven quality of the provision in the recent past when prolonged staff absences meant that teaching was often done by a succession of temporary teachers. The teachers are trying to remedy this by increasing the emphasis on revision of grammar. However, the teaching makes too little use of visual aids to emphasise the patterns that make learning grammatical endings easier.
102. The teaching for GCSE moves pupils on to an appreciation of the literary values of Roman authors so that more able pupils identify features which Latin authors use to heighten their appeal to the reader. This was seen in a good lesson on the letters of Pliny, where the teacher showed how the author was making a moral point about the way that all guests, and by implication all people, should be treated equally, regardless of their social rank. All the pupils recognised the way that the author was making a general point about society, while describing a specific dinner party.
103. Pupils are responsive in lessons and enjoy the work set for them. They work in a purposeful manner and listen attentively. Teaching was satisfactory or better in all of the lessons seen, and overall the teaching is good. The teachers have a very good grasp of the subject matter and an obvious enthusiasm that stimulates pupils. Teachers take great care about the pronunciation of Latin and this provides an excellent model for pupils. Written work is set regularly and marked in a way that affirms achievement. The marking usually contains comments that help pupils to make further progress.
104. The strong place that this subject holds in the school is a sign of the breadth and balance of the curriculum. The subject matter is aimed at giving a rounded picture of the classical world. Teaching often links Latin with English and other languages and extends the vocabulary of pupils effectively. However, opportunities to link Latin and common English words were not always exploited fully. There are extra-curricular visits, including trips abroad (this year's trip is to Greece) as well as trips to local places of interest. These both raise awareness of the subject and enrich the curriculum. The head of department was only appointed in January 2003 but has a clear vision of what is needed to improve standards and has drawn up a methodical and realistic scheme to achieve this. She manages the subject well. 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.

Modern foreign languages

The provision for modern foreign languages is **good**.

Standards in **French** and **German** are above average in Year 9 but improve by Year 11 where results and current standards in both subjects are well above average.

French

In 2002, GCSE results at grades A*-C in French were very high in comparison with the national average.

German

GCSE results in were well above the national average in 2002

Standards in both languages were in line with those found in similar schools. Pupils are generally better at writing than speaking and most Year 11 pupils are able, for example, to write at length in French about their work experience placements and future career aspirations.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject leadership is characterised by clarity of vision and a sense of purpose.
- The outstanding programme of visits abroad fosters a spirit of internationalism and promotes pupils' cultural development.
- There is a lack of challenge and pace in some teaching in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to practise the spoken language in class.
- High attaining pupils achieve fewer very high GCSE grades than in their other subjects.
- The subject has yet to make full use of achievement data to evaluate the performance of individuals and groups; and to inform planning.

Commentary

105. The achievement of pupils studying languages throughout the school has been satisfactory but, from work seen in the inspection, looks set to improve under the new subject leadership. The cultural development of pupils is greatly enhanced by their sense of belonging to an international community, derived from the programme of journeys abroad and their visits to the remarkable residential centre at Uzel in Brittany.
106. Pupils in Year 7 to 9 make satisfactory progress in French and German lessons. They approach the subject with a positive attitude and benefit from the encouragement of their teachers. They tackle their homework conscientiously and respond well to the thorough marking of their written work. Teaching is generally sound but lessons often lack pace and there is insufficient challenge in the work given to these high attaining pupils. As a result, a minority of pupils are inattentive and do not make sufficient progress. The biggest barrier to achievement is the over-reliance of teachers on textbook exercises and the lack of opportunities to practise the spoken language in class. Pupils make better progress when lessons are well planned to offer them a variety of activities; and when the foreign language is required as the main language of communication in class. An example was when pupils excused themselves very convincingly in French at the end of a lesson to attend an instrumental music class.
107. Most teaching is good or better in Years 10 to 11 in both French and German and as a result pupils learn well. Expectations are higher and lessons are well organised to ensure progress in language skills. Pupils are treated like adults and encouraged to work independently, using dictionaries readily and tackling substantial homework to extend their learning. Teachers use the foreign language extensively, except when complex tasks are being explained or when very helpful grammatical explanations are being provided. In some lessons, expectations are not always clear and, because of a lack of rigour, opportunities are lost to stretch the highest attaining pupils. All pupils make better progress in lessons where they are actively engaged in learning; and when textbooks are set aside to enable them to develop their speaking skills in genuine acts of communication. Sympathetic teaching and the good-humoured attitudes of the pupils promote a pleasant learning environment in most classes.
108. The subject is in a state of transition and, as a result of very good subject leadership, there is now a clear vision for raising the profile of modern foreign languages at the school. An effective team, with new responsibilities, is well focused on the spreading of good practice and on the better use of achievement data to raise standards. Planning is also in hand to improve

the provision of computer equipment to help pupils with their language learning. An upgrade of sound reproduction equipment would also enhance pupils' understanding of recorded material. The numbers of pupils studying two languages for GCSE is lower than that found for boys in similar schools nationally. Since the last inspection, there has been some improvement in the use of assessment procedures and in the take-up rates of French in the sixth form. The subject has yet to fully address the underachievement of very high attaining pupils at GCSE and the lack of pace in some lessons in Years 7 to 9. There is, however, an evident willingness and capacity in the leadership of the subject to bring about the necessary improvement.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above national averages in both Year 9 and Year 11.
- Achievement in all year groups is very good.
- Pupils' attitudes to the subject are very positive and contribute significantly to the learning environment.
- Teachers' subject knowledge and expertise are excellent.
- The newly appointed Head of Faculty positively promotes teaching and learning and provides a very good role model to other staff.
- Some aspects of assessment are underdeveloped, in particular:
 - Use of constructive feedback to pupils in marking.
 - Pupils' knowledge of how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- ICT needs to be an integral part of pupils' mathematical experiences.

Commentary

109. Standards overall for mathematics are well above national averages at both Year 9 and Year 11. The positive trend in results for Year 9 in the national tests is above that seen nationally. This performance is maintained when compared to similar schools, including other grammar schools. Pupils' achievement is very good.
110. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 continue to make very good progress and their performance at GCSE is high compared to both national expectations and their prior attainment. In 2002 eighty nine percent of pupils achieved grades A*, A or B, well above national figures and broadly in line with the national trend.
111. Teaching and learning in Years 7, 8 and 9 are good and often very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge that creates a positive learning environment. They demonstrate enthusiasm and enjoyment for mathematics. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are good and enable them to discuss and analyse their work productively. A variety of teaching strategies and resources is being introduced with the National Numeracy Strategy. These are having a positive impact on pupils' motivation. For example, in a Year 8 class, pupils used Multilink cubes to explore ratios. The pupils were able to work out problems involving ratios such as 12:8 and quickly came to understand its simplification to 3:2.
112. In all lessons, pupils are engaged and demonstrate very good concentration and behaviour. Often, where teaching and learning are very good, teachers use questioning to challenge and extend pupils' mathematical thinking. For example, in a Year 8 lesson on different bases pupils were asked to 'Think of another way to write these' when comparing column headings for base 10 and base 3. Pupils, encouraged by the teacher, quickly solved the problem and the pace of the learning remained brisk.

113. In Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning are good. All classes are timetabled with specialist teachers who have excellent subject knowledge. Together with the pupils' desire to explore new mathematical knowledge, this creates a vibrant and lively mathematical community. In a Year 10 lesson, for example, an interactive whiteboard was used to draw parallel lines. The pupils were then able quickly to deduce the connections between the gradients and the intercepts and apply this new knowledge to a variety of situations.
114. Assessment procedures are satisfactory. All teachers set homework and books are marked regularly. Teachers keep accurate records of pupils' progress and often use these to inform their planning. However, many teachers fail to provide constructive feedback comments in their marking to enable pupils to know what to do to improve. The use of prior attainment data, to enable teachers to set targets, is only in the early stages of development. This means that, particularly in lower school, pupils are unsure as to how well they are doing relative to their potential.
115. The mathematics department has made very good progress since the last inspection. Standards of attainment remain high. Expert teaching continues to impact positively on pupils' learning and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen during the inspection. The schemes of work now detail where ICT can be used and teachers are confident in its use for teaching and demonstration. Pupils often use graphic calculators appropriately to explore patterns in number and two-dimensional work, such as coordinate geometry. Limited access to computers remains a barrier to pupils' learning although further developments in this area are planned. Enrichment activities are available for the gifted pupils in Year 7 and these are gradually being introduced to other years.
116. Relationships are very good. Teachers provide excellent role models and share a commitment to improving standards and achievement for all pupils. Pupils work very well together and respect the diversity of each other's needs. Older pupils, in particular, are given opportunities to develop and enhance their mathematical thinking through group and paired discussion. Accurate mathematical language is used throughout to provide a rich learning culture. Pupils and teachers are encouraged to take risks in their learning with no fear of ridicule or harassment.
117. The newly appointed Head of Faculty provides very good leadership with a strong focus on teaching and learning. He has a clear vision for the department. This is shared with other teachers and promotes a collegiate approach. He recognises there is much to do and has set sensible priorities, initially focussing on continuity and progression from Years 12 to 13. The quality of management is good. In the few weeks since his appointment, the head of mathematics has worked hard to establish systems and procedures that support the quality of teaching and learning. Monitoring and evaluation of the department's work is in place and short and medium plans have been reviewed following an initial audit. Further work is underway to ensure that these processes become fully embedded in the culture of the department.

Mathematics across the curriculum

118. Numeracy across the curriculum is very good and pupils use and apply their mathematics in a variety of subjects. Other subject teachers have high expectations of pupils' mathematical competence and promote these within their lessons. In a Year 7 science lesson, for example, pupils were asked to identify patterns from the data they had collected and then produce an appropriate graph. In art pupils were required to use a number of mathematical skills including enlargement, inversion and proportion to enhance their artistic outcomes.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good** with some **excellent features**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The number of A* and A passes is very high and exceeds a half of all entries.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good. In over a third of lessons seen, teaching was excellent.
- There is excellent departmental leadership and management.

Commentary

119. Standards have continued to rise in science since the last inspection. At Key Stage 4 in 2002 the number of GCSE A* to C grades was 97 per cent in double science compared to 91 per cent A* to C for similar boys' selective schools, and a significant number of pupils opt for and attain GCSE A* to C passes in all three separate sciences (biology, chemistry and physics) in parallel to the main entry cohort. The number of A* and A passes is very high and in 2003 now exceeds a half of all GCSE entries.
120. Standards as measured by science National Curriculum tests in Year 9 are very much above national expectations, and well above those for similar schools. There is excellent progression from science levels in the National Curriculum test taken in Year 6 and a very good match in agreement with teacher assessment at the end of Year 9.
121. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall, with one third of all lessons seen rated as excellent. The principal features of the teaching are very clear learning objectives shared directly and overtly with pupils, sharp planning, a brisk pace and a range of methods and approaches to bring about learning. Teachers show very good subject knowledge and repertoire in their questions and explanations. In the tasks set, there is an emphasis on discussion and articulating learning. In Years 7 to 9, there is considerable understanding on the part of teachers how a three-part lesson is conducted and the lesson plenary acts as a confirmation of the detailed aims provided at the outset. There is always full class involvement and the quality of scientific oracy and writing reflects the very good listening and pupil responses demanded by staff. This practice is continued into years 10 and 11 and sixth form lessons as appropriate. There is a climate of high expectation but also offered support.
122. Use of homework and tests supports pupils' self-assessment and is matched by a very good standard of teachers' diagnostic marking and feedback. Pupils support and help each other effectively and in groups, talk and listen to each others contributions as part of their learning. The introduction of ICT-AV data projectors for use by teaching staff and pupils has offered a further dimension of variety and pace to lessons, with staff projecting prepared materials and video-clips from their lap-tops on to whiteboard screens. Members of staff sometimes write in parallel or over these materials to reinforce key points, making them really interactive. There is very good support in these lessons for key skills so that scientific literacy, numeracy, graphical understanding and appreciation of the control of variables is very well understood. Science safety is extremely well communicated. Very good standards of pupils' skill and care were evidenced frequently in all laboratory routines seen. Pupils make very good use of textbooks and the faculty has used increased provision to advantage, so that use of *two* student texts per pupil aids progression and active consolidation or revision.
123. The leadership and management of the faculty are excellent. The key issues arising from the last inspection indicating that the quality of accommodation and ICT provision in the subject area were limiting standards have both now been fully addressed. Standards have risen consistently over the last four years and now exceed those of similar selective schools, and so are exceptionally good. The faculty is making a significant contribution to the school's

initiative as a Specialist Engineering College and its links with the development of an A2/AS level in Systems Engineering place it at a leading edge. This is an excellent faculty with very many significant strengths and no weaknesses.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Overall provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good across the school and pupils are working up to their individual capabilities, and continually increasing their potential.
- Standards overall are well above national expectations by the end of Year 9; well above the national average for all schools, and broadly in line with the national average for selective boys' schools at the end of Year 11.
- Overall, teaching and learning are very good, and never less than good. Teachers plan and present the subject with enthusiasm, and very good use is made of new technology. Learning is greatly enhanced by the very good facilities and opportunities offered.
- The subject is extremely well led and managed.
- Assessment is effectively linked to National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9, and examination criteria in Years 10 to 11 shared with pupils.
- Very good improvement since the last inspection and development plans identify priorities for further progress.
- The quality of cross-curricular ICT is very variable; there is little use of ICT in music, modern foreign languages, history and geography.

Commentary

124. A major contribution to the specialist engineering college status of the school is made through information communication technology (ICT). The use of new innovative resources are complementing literacy, numeracy and graphicacy skills, and helping to bring the school to the forefront of educational technological initiatives.
125. Standards overall are well above national expectations by the end of Year 9, and well above the national average for all schools, and broadly in line with the national average for selective boys' schools at the end of Year 11. Achievement is very good in both key stages; pupils are working up to their individual capabilities, and continually increasing their potential, in this fast moving subject.
126. Advanced use of ICT is evident in all years. Year 7 pupils combine well written prose and digital images, in thoughtfully presented articles about themselves and e-mail their homework to their teacher for marking, Year 8 pupils make orthographic drawings, using conventional drawing instruments and also electronically, using 'professional' software. Their work is of a high standard and they make well-informed comparisons of the two methods. Year 8 pupils also use advanced graphical processes, in well-designed public information leaflets. Year 9 show very good knowledge of systems and control software in their work on control systems for a theme park ride apparatus. In Year 10, very good use is made of desk top publishing software through a range of applications - for example, coursework design sheets, travel leaflets, etc. Year 11 pupils work quickly, accurately and productively when designing and analysing database computer systems for estate agents, leisure clubs and retail outlets.
127. Teaching and learning are overall very good. Teaching is never less than good. Teachers plan and present the subject with enthusiasm. Very good use is made of new technology; learning is greatly enhanced by the very good facilities and opportunities offered. There are discrete ICT lessons for all pupils up to the end of Year 10, when all pupils take the GCSE

ICT short course examination and optional full course GCSE for Year 11 pupils. The GCSE courses are well planned and taught. Teachers have very good knowledge of examination requirements and assessment criteria, and this contributes significantly to pupils' learning.

128. The ICT curriculum is taught in an interesting way, through varied methods and not all through practical computer work. For example, the combination of whole-class and individual tuition promotes an inclusive ethos. The use of question and answer sessions is very good in the best lessons and could be developed further in others, with questions directed to specific pupils by name. Similarly, greater use of evaluative plenary sessions could further aid retention and progression. Lesson aims and objectives are clearly stated, and procedures carefully explained with very good use of overhead computer projectors. Teachers have very good knowledge of the school's extensive range of software, and this promotes very good learning and achievement. However, further integration of graphical design principles could help to improve overall standards of presentation.
129. The subject is led and managed extremely well. The discrete ICT lessons for all pupils are beginning to raise standards in other curriculum areas. Assessment is successfully linked to National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 and examination criteria in Years 10 and 11 and shared effectively with pupils. There is an excellent range of opportunities, for pupils in most subject areas, and the ICT National Curriculum requirements are fully met across the school. The school has a very favourable ratio of pupils to computers but where they are sited means that some subjects find access more difficult. Development plans address these issues, but further help in the form of an ICT steering group, with representatives from all faculties, could aid co-ordination and staff training. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection, and current initiatives, both school and departmental, identify priorities for further progress.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

130. The school's ICT policy statement places strong emphasis on giving all pupils the opportunity to develop their ICT skills, through all subjects of the curriculum, and tries to ensure that all pupils, including post-16 students, have as wide a range of ICT experience as is possible. This is happening in most areas, but not all. The quality of cross-curricular ICT is very variable; good use is made of Internet research in English, and data logging in science. Digital cameras are used effectively in art and physical education. There is not enough use of ICT in music, modern foreign languages, history and geography. In these areas pupils' experience and competence in the subject context and potential achievement are inevitably reduced. However, the discrete ICT lessons ensure that all pupils gain the necessary skills, and are able to apply these to a wide range of applications, for example, use of the Internet for research. Overall, pupils' capabilities are well above average for their ages. Pupils use ICT effectively and achieve well in English, science, design and technology, business studies, mathematics, art, and religious education.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision for Geography is **very good**.

Strengths and weaknesses

- Very good attainment at GCSE.
- Very good teaching.
- Boys' good attitudes to learning.
- The drive to maintain high standards.
- The lack of access to ICT in classrooms at present.

Commentary

131. By the end of Year 11 in 2002 A* to C results at GCSE were significantly above national averages and in line with similar schools in terms of A*/A grades. In 2003, the results at A*/A had improved to be better than similar schools. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good, and effectively builds on the pupils' good progress in Years 7 to 9.
132. Teaching is very good overall. Some is good and some is excellent. Teaching is imaginative and holds the pupils' interest. Lessons are challenging. Pupils make good progress because of this. Lessons are well planned and teachers understand how to extend pupils to the next stages of their learning. This information is shared well with pupils at GCSE, where grade criteria are shared with pupils in developing their coursework, but is shared to a lesser extent in Years 7 to 9. This is a factor in teaching being good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. The sharing of grade criteria also helps in extending the most able pupils. Teachers are enthusiastic and very knowledgeable about the subject and the examination system and use these qualities well to ensure that all pupils are successful, the majority at the highest grades. The boys' attitude to learning is very good, and this attitude is developed through attention to working together in groups, respecting each other's right to be heard in discussion, not laughing at mistakes and being allowed to make mistakes and subsequently learn from these.
133. The department is led well. There is a strong drive for improvement, evidenced by the target to improve A*/A grades to 60% in 2003, which was exceeded. High standards were maintained in A* to C grades at the same time. Teaching and learning are effective, as is the drive to maintain high standards. The head of faculty monitors teaching and learning. The department is organised effectively and essential functions are effective and not excessively bureaucratic. These include the setting of targets based on prior attainment and ensuring the curriculum is appropriate for pupils to achieve the highest grades. Responsibilities are effectively delegated. The leader is constructively critical of standards and seeks improvement at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE.
134. The curriculum is good in geography and has been updated to include planned provision for citizenship. Other cross-curricular strands are outlined in the schemes of work; for example, ICT, literacy development and numeracy development. At present the lack of access to ICT in classrooms hinders its effective use to support learning. Opportunities to develop pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are taken regularly, but at present, this provision is not planned into the schemes of work. There is good extra-curricular support through fieldwork, homework club and visits.

History

Provision in history is **good** with some **very good** features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The high levels of attainment at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE.
- The good quality of teaching, which is based on profound enthusiasm for the subject and high expectations of pupils' achievement.
- The quality of higher order thinking and analytical skills that are engendered in pupils.

Commentary

135. In 2002, GCSE results were significantly above the national average for all maintained schools. The 2002 GCSE results were in line with those of other selective schools, although fewer pupils from the school reached the highest grades. In 2003, a larger cohort attained

stronger results at GCSE with 31 per cent of pupils gaining A*/A, and 88 per cent gained A* to C grades. In 2003, teacher assessment tests at the end of Year 9 showed that pupils were attaining standards that were significantly above the national average.

136. Inspection evidence confirms 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 good knowledge and understanding of the major historical events and personalities they are studying. They appreciate that history is based on evidence and that the past has been interpreted in different ways. Pupils can extract information from a variety of written and pictorial sources. Thinking skills are well developed. Pupils are able to synthesise and adapt what they learn in class and from their reading, and to organise ideas in logical and coherent forms. They write at length in an appropriate register in response to the increasingly sophisticated questions presented by their teachers. In general, pupils show a good sense of chronology and use historical terms confidently.
137. At the end of Year 11, overall attainment is well above the nationally expected level. Pupils' historical knowledge and understanding have deepened. They are able to construct and substantiate arguments, and to challenge different historical interpretations. They demonstrate a well-developed empathetic understanding and show perception in their answers. Overall, pupils have the ability to ask and answer questions, which contribute to extended debate and reasoned argument. They are responsive to the directions of their teachers and are well motivated to take responsibility in pursuing independent lines of historical enquiry.
138. Pupils join the school with above average levels of attainment, but few skills in history. Overall, they make good progress in the subject due to the highly focused teaching of basic historical skills.
139. The quality of teaching in history is at least satisfactory and more frequently good and sometimes excellent. Lessons, which are well paced and structured, lead to clear gains in learning. Knowledge and understanding are systematically consolidated. Teachers are very confident in their possession of subject knowledge, and exposition is clear and direct. By challenging pupils appropriately, teachers encourage the development of higher order thinking and analytical skills. Much is done to help pupils to articulate their knowledge and to share different ideas and viewpoints. The department sets as a priority the development of pupils' writing skills and sets extended writing tasks regularly. Exercises are carefully structured to suit all pupils, including the very able. Secure relationships contribute to generally good behavioural standards and positive attitudes to the subject. Regular homework is used to reinforce learning in lessons, but there is scope for greater consistency in marking practice and further refinement in the use of grade descriptors. Target setting helps pupils to gain a clearer view of their own standards and the action required to enhance their performance. Teachers are generous with time and take advantage of opportunities outside lessons to continue historical discussions. Pupils respect their teachers and are keen to succeed. History is a popular subject in the school.
140. The new head of department, appointed in September 2002, is firmly committed to raising standards. He radiates a passion for history, which is infectious. Levels of co-operation are excellent as teachers work collaboratively and share good practice openly. Lessons successfully incorporate a diversity of learning strategies, styles and activities that promote high expectations of achievement. Good quality resources, including teacher-produced worksheets, are used to stimulate interest and help understanding. Appropriate schemes of work are in place and the department demonstrates a readiness to innovate in response to changing needs. Development planning identifies priorities for the future, including strengthening cross-curricular links and making greater use of ICT in lessons. There is a good level of monitoring and review.

141. The head of department recognises the need to improve the accessibility and analysis of assessment data, including value added information. From September, teachers have made good use of their new laptops in lessons and for administrative purposes. As yet, the subject has provided few opportunities to develop pupils' ICT skills in lessons. This has been due to pressures on a limited number of school computers and the lack of dedicated workstations in the history teaching rooms.
142. Visits are organised annually to enrich the curriculum. A selection of enrichment activities, some especially designed to challenge the highest attaining pupils, support learning. The department contributes to moral and social education, as well as to the teaching of citizenship.
143. The well above average standards recorded at the last inspection have been maintained. Progress in Years 7 to 9, and pupils' attitudes to learning overall have improved.

Religious education

Overall the quality of provision in religious education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning have raised standards to well above average.
- The subject makes an excellent contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The use of ICT is firmly established in all aspects of the subject.
- Marking and assessment could be used more effectively and consistently.
- GCSE results declined in the last three years.
- Curricular time allocation for the sixth form and for non-examination classes in Years 10 and 11 does not meet the recommendation of the Devon Agreed syllabus.

Commentary

144. Although the results of the small number of pupils taking the GCSE option declined over the last three years, they are still well above the national average.
145. Standards in the current year 9 are well above national expectations. Pupils of all ability levels extend and develop their knowledge of the major world faiths. They are keen to discuss their ideas and respond positively to the philosophical and spiritual elements of the subject. Their oral and written work is perceptive and their use of technical vocabulary is accurate. All pupils use ICT competently for research and in the presentation of their work. Their achievement is good in all aspects of the subject.
146. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are well above national expectations. The pupils have intellectual curiosity. They have open minds and enjoy exploring philosophical, moral and spiritual themes. They are able make connections between religious belief, behaviour and attitudes. Pupils express themselves confidently, using a rich vocabulary. The work in their books and files shows that many will achieve the highest grades in GCSE examinations.
147. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Lessons for both the GCSE and non-examination classes are intellectually rigorous and challenging. Schemes of work are effectively planned to include literacy development. The boys are encouraged to reflect upon what they have learned, to discuss their opinions analytically and to look at issues from a variety of viewpoints. A wide range of clever and inventive teaching strategies is used to capture the imagination of the pupils and some teachers have expert subject knowledge. Marking is accurate and regular but more could be done to advise pupils on how to improve their work. Learning extends beyond the classroom in extra-curricular activities such as philosophy club and visits to places of religious significance.

148. Leadership and management are very good. A new head of department has had an immediate impact on raising standards and improving the profile of the subject. The number of pupils choosing the GCSE option has quadrupled. The teachers are hard-working and committed and together make a good team. Very effective support is provided for non-specialist teachers and good practice is shared, though this needs to be developed further. The department is aware of its strengths and weaknesses and has made very good progress since the last inspection.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

Overall provision for design and technology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are overall well above national expectations at the end of Key Stage 3, and well above the national average for all schools and broadly in line with the national average for selective boys' schools at the end of Key Stage 4.
- Achievement is very good in both key stages; pupils are working up to their individual capabilities.
- Learning is advanced by very good extra-curricular activities and links with the community and industry.
- Overall, teaching is good, and there is some very good teaching. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and communicate it well. Class management is very good.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- ICT is used effectively to enhance learning and achievement in all areas of the subject.
- Assessment is related to National Curriculum levels, and GCSE criteria, and shared effectively with pupils.
- Very good improvement has been made since the last inspection.

Commentary

149. The Design and Technology department makes a major contribution to the specialist engineering college status of the school. The recent acquisition of innovative resources is bringing a technological dimension that is helping to raise the profile of the subject. Through links with other educational establishments and industry the department is fast becoming a leader in its approach to engineering practice for young people, and striving to be at the forefront of educational technological initiatives.
150. Standards overall are well above national expectations at the end of Year 9. By the end of Year 11, standards are well above the national average for all schools and broadly in line with the national average for selective boys' schools. The department has plans to challenge the more able, and gifted and talented pupils in Years 7 to 9; and to target the improvement of GCSE coursework to raise overall standards at GCSE.
151. All pupils follow the design process well when designing and making products. Year 7 pupils understand the concepts of drawing in isometric and oblique projection. Their freehand drawing shows confidence and good spatial awareness. When learning about mechanisms, Year 9 pupils are very inventive and show initiative when working with gears and cams to produce reciprocating and oscillating movements. When making storage units, Year 10 pupils use hand and power tools effectively, joints are carefully measured cut and assembled, and finished products represent very good achievement overall. Folders show good content in design sheets with many original ideas, and well considered design briefs and specifications. Year 11 pupils work well independently on designing automatic pet feeding systems. They use computer notebooks and electronic circuit design software very effectively. Linking selected projects to the work of well-known designers, specific design movements, or the design of

other cultures, for example, Art Deco, Bauhaus, or the Arts and Crafts Movement could further promote high design standards.

152. Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning; they enjoy working in the department and tackle the assignments with great enthusiasm. The department makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development through visits, links with local industry and the community, and the many curricular links with environmental, social and moral considerations promoted through designing and manufacturing products. Achievement is very good in both key stages; the vast majority of pupils are working up to their individual capabilities.
153. Teaching is good overall, and there is some very good teaching. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and communicate it well. Class management is very good; lesson aims and objectives are clearly stated. Schemes of work cover National Curriculum requirements well, through well-planned and well-taught design and make projects. Assessment in Years 7 to 9 is linked closely to National Curriculum levels and level descriptors and shared effectively with pupils. In Years 10 and 11 assessment is related closely to GCSE grades; teachers promote the use of examination criteria, and place strong emphasis on realistic evaluation at the end of each project. Teachers make very good use of computer projectors and physical models to illustrate concepts. They integrate theory and practical work effectively and communicate ideas through very good drawing skills. Good use is made of high quality computer aided design software, and lessons in computer-aided manufacture are developing well. There are no major weaknesses in teaching; however, in some lessons more use could be made of question and answer sessions, with more pupil participation to reinforce learning and aid ongoing assessment. Longer, more evaluative whole-class discussion sessions, with greater emphasis on design principles, could promote higher achievement and design standards.
154. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. Teamwork is strong, and members of staff are excellent role models. The accommodation and resources are well organised. Very good improvement has been made since the last inspection. Standards of design and graphics have improved through the use of ICT and planning builds progressively on past experience. Teaching overall has improved. Teachers have high expectations, and there is good improvement in the monitoring of standards and teaching. Major improvements in resourcing, assessment and the consideration of health and safety have been made. Very good school and department plans are in place to develop the subject further.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art

Provision in art is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The high quality teaching and learning.
- Very good relationships linked to a sharing of a passion and enthusiasm for art.
- The significant improvement in the role of art in the school since the appointment of the current head of department linked to steadily increasing numbers in examination groups.
- Difficult access to ICT in the department for appropriate use in the day-to-day curriculum.
- The assessment scheme not using attainment target criteria and levels to aid pupils' self-assessment.

Commentary

155. Standards in art are good. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is well above the national average, reflecting the ability of the cohort. However, this is not reflected in the GCSE results, which over time have been at the national average for similar schools, and well above them for all schools. The 2002 results were weak, but returned to their previous level in 2003. Numbers taking examination courses are steadily increasing, and standards are improving.
156. Some very good work was seen in sketchbooks that have been built on direct observational drawing. Individual skills and interests are encouraged and success celebrated. The role of local artists and their work and the associated artists-in-residence - especially in the activities week- has a significant impact on pupils. The pottery from Years 7 and 8 made as part of an activities week is of exceptionally high quality. All pupils work at their own level and make good progress. The Internet research work at all levels is of very high quality, and pupils astutely select for importance and relevance. As a consequence of these factors, achievement is good.
157. Teaching and learning are both very good at all levels. In the best lessons there are high levels of teacher expertise across the curriculum, particularly strong in ICT. Planning, preparation and target setting are strong features and individual feedback turns corporate targets into individual ones. There is both encouragement and challenge in lessons, and in the best a sense of urgency. Pupils were seen learning by observation and analysis, skill development, from demonstration and other input, through research and development, often by use of sketchbooks, and above all by progressive refinement of both skills and work in progress.
158. Leadership is very good, and the head of department has ensured that colleagues are valued and together they make up a very good team. Management is effective and efficient, and development planning is effective. There is an exciting programme of visits in this country and abroad. ICT resources are not yet sufficient to give easy or appropriate access within lessons. There is a good assessment system with links to National Curriculum criteria and levels, but which needs further refinement to increase the role and impact of pupil self-assessment.
159. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good; the three issues mentioned in the last report have been fully resolved. Numbers for examination groups are steadily increasing and examination results are significantly improving.

Drama

The provision for drama is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in drama and attain above average standards.
- Teaching across the department is skilled.
- Pupils have, overall, very good attitudes to the subject.
- Assessment needs development and refining.

Commentary

160. The standards of work seen in Year 11 are well above average. This is reflected in the GCSE examination results, although in 2002 they were average, reflecting the fact that there was a staff change. Pupils achieve well in the subject.

161. Pupils are able to work together very well. They are able to rehearse and refine their work. They approached practical investigation of *Billy Liar* work with maturity, responding very well to the skilled interventions by the teacher. Year 9 pupils used a range of techniques such as 'freeze frame' and 'thought tracking' in the early exploration of developing a piece of political theatre. Year 7 pupils retold their fairy tale narratives with skill and polish- a particularly anarchic version of Three Little Pigs comes to mind.
162. Overall, pupils' attitudes to the subject are very good, although some individuals have still to learn the disciplines of the subject. In the main they are very enthusiastic, want to do well and clearly gain a considerable sense of success from their achievements. Learning is good. They are generous to others' skills and gain much from developing the skills of teamwork and listening and responding to others' views.
163. Teachers all bring particular skills to the subject. Teaching is good across the department. It is sometimes very good. The subject leader is a skilled practitioner who develops, overall, very good relationships with the pupils. He has very good subject knowledge and judges particularly well when to make interventions in order to take pupils' work forward. Non-specialist teachers are supported effectively by the scheme of work with the result that all pupils in a year group gain a similar experience. Currently opportunities for the subject leader to see other teachers at work are limited. The subject leader has introduced homework in the subject to extend the learning that takes place in the studio or hall.
164. The subject is still in transition and the subject leader is still in the process of creating the department in line with his views rather than an inherited vision. Subject management is good and the subject leader has a clear view of how he wants the subject to develop. Assessment could be refined and more overt use made of grade criteria and creating level descriptions to raise standards further. There are aspects of the resources that require investment. The subject makes a very significant contribution to the school's spiritual, moral, social and cultural, and, indeed, citizenship provision. Productions, such as *The Tempest*, and drama clubs enrich the curriculum.

Music

The overall provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good provision for extra curricular music.
- The positive relationships with the pupils.
- The wide range of instrumental provision within the school.
- Weak schemes of work need to be refined and made more specific.
- Weak assessment procedures and record keeping need developing.
- Unsatisfactory use of ICT in the department.
- Unsatisfactory leadership and management.

Commentary

165. Standards seen in Years 7 to 9 are satisfactory. Teacher assessments for Year 9 in 2003 suggest an unrealistically high figure. Standards in Year 10 and 11 are unsatisfactory owing to the lack of performing and composing opportunities in Year 11.
166. Teaching and learning are satisfactory across the school. Relationships with pupils are positive and teachers have very good subject knowledge but sometimes adopt a lecturing style with little opportunity for discussion and evaluation. Although there is questioning it is not developed. Classes have a wide range of prior attainment and lesson planning often does not take this into account with the result that pupils' potential is not exploited sufficiently. The

scheme of work in Years 7 to 9 needs further refining. Pupils' activities should be more specific, assessment opportunities clearly identified and linked to National Curriculum programmes of study. Record keeping should monitor pupils' progress throughout a key stage for performing, composing and listening tasks. These should be supplemented by recorded examples of work so that pupils can be given secure targets for improvement and the information used to inform teachers' planning, so that judgements at the end of Year 9 can be better informed than at present. Both ICT and singing are lacking in Years 7 to 9. Some aspects of teaching and learning in Year 10 are good but are unsatisfactory overall because of the lack of performing and composing opportunities for pupils in Year 11. Little use is made of ICT to enhance pupils' experiences of the wide range of compositional techniques and styles available. For example, in a Year 10 lesson, pupils working on chords from a section of Britten's '*Gloriana*' could have been extended to include examples from other styles and cultures.

167. Leadership and management of the department are unsatisfactory. Schemes of work throughout the department need refining and adjusting in order to identify clearly pupil tasks and assessment outcomes. Record keeping and marking need to be more systematic and thorough. Greater use of self-evaluation, including data analysis, needs to be implemented and the opportunities for the use of ICT to support, extend and enhance learning should be made available. The present accommodation is poor but the department is about to move into purpose built accommodation, which should ease the inadequate facilities that are affecting standards in Year 11.
168. A clear strength of the department is the range and quality of its extra-curricular work. Numerous groups and ensembles are run, that include Junior Wind Band, Swing Band, String Group, Friday Choir (including girls from local schools) and senior ensemble. There are wide instrumental opportunities available in the school and pupils are given opportunities to perform as beginners and more advanced players twice a year. The Friday Choir has recently returned from a visit to Russia; it performs regularly together with the Swing Band, both at home and on annual foreign tours. The school holds a very successful annual musical production.
169. The department has made some progress in dealing with the issues of concern identified in the last inspection report, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Teaching and learning are now satisfactory throughout the school and the scheme of work reflects a wider opportunity for diverse musical experiences for the pupils.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT

Provision in physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and, consequently, pupils make very good progress, acquire new skills and achieve very well.
- Standards throughout the school are above national averages and well above in GCSE.
- Leadership and management are both very good and provide the subject with a clear vision for improvement.
- Pupils display very good attitudes and behaviour as a result of good teaching, interest in the activities and very good relationships.
- Although accommodation is satisfactory overall, storage and changing areas are poor.

Commentary

170. The percentage of pupils who achieved an A* to C grade in the 2002 GCSE examinations was well above the national average for all and for selective schools. Teacher assessments for pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2002 were very high compared to national averages.

171. By the end of Year 9, overall standards are above the national average. Pupils make very good progress and achieve well when acquiring new skills in games activities. They apply the skills very well in small group and partner games. For example, in a Year 7 short tennis lesson pupils achieved very well in a lower group and showed standards of skill that were above average. Higher attaining pupils in Year 8 show well above average rugby skills of rucking and mauling. By the end of Year 11, pupils have made very good progress and achieve standards that are well above average. Higher attaining pupils in Year 10 soccer have good awareness and technical knowledge. Standards in GCSE practical and theory lessons are well above average and pupils display very good technique and control in volleyball. They achieve very well considering their limited prior experience in this new activity. Pupils have very good knowledge of anatomical vocabulary and the circulatory system.
172. The quality of teaching throughout the school is very good overall and, as a result, pupils learn very well and make very good progress. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. As a result, pupils learn new techniques and apply them well in increasingly demanding situations. Lessons are planned well with clear objectives, structure and progression so that pupils know what they are about to learn. Teachers use a very good range of teaching styles and introduce tasks progressively to ensure that pupils gain confidence and refine their skills. Lessons run at a brisk pace but pupils are given sufficient time to consolidate skills before moving on. Teachers' very high expectations and very good relationships ensure that pupils' interest, attitudes, behaviour and physical efforts are consistently very good. Pupils have very good speaking and listening skills, are very confident to enter into discussion and use good subject vocabulary. They are given good opportunity to evaluate their own performance and that of others, thus gaining understanding of technical points.
173. Teaching is excellent in Year 11 GCSE practical work and, consequently, pupils achieve very well considering their limited prior experience. The teacher's very high expectations and excellent demonstrations enable pupils to display very good techniques and control in volleyball.
174. The department is led very well and management is very good. A clear vision and direction are provided for the department to improve and bi – annual reviews are carried out. Systems to monitor the progress of pupils are good. Members of staff are very committed to the excellent range of extra-curricular activities that provide very good opportunities for talented pupils. Although accommodation in the new sports hall is excellent and resources are very good, changing and storage areas for equipment are poor. Improvement since the last inspection has been good as standards of achievement, the quality of teaching and indoor accommodation are better.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business Studies in the main school

175. Lessons were sampled. Teaching and learning were good. Pupils were engaged by problem solving activities that required them to apply concepts in a variety of contexts. They benefited from the teachers' good subject knowledge and well prepared resources. Positive relationships and good on-going assessment of pupils understanding promoted learning. Standards were well above national and achievement was good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision for personal, social and health education is **good**.

The curriculum has been refined in response to pupils' views and now incorporates valuable and much appreciated expert input from beyond the school staff. The range of topics covered is appropriate and supports pupils' personal development well by dealing with familiar personal issues such as bullying as well as health and issues of global concern.

Citizenship

The provision for citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The underlying ethos of the school, which supports citizenship very well.
- Good management and leadership.
- Very good planning of the citizenship units, which all pupils are taught.
- High quality teaching and learning in nearly all lessons.
- Assessment procedures have begun but are not yet fully developed.
- The cross-curricular subject contribution to citizenship is currently monitored insufficiently.

Commentary

176. An audit of the actual and potential contribution of subjects and basic planning for the implementation of citizenship began in the previous academic year. However, staffing difficulties prevented further development and a new co-ordinator was appointed in September 2003. Citizenship is taught as a separate subject throughout the school and reinforced within departments. It is very well supported by a wide range of visits, visitors and community links and by assemblies that are frequently linked to the citizenship curriculum. A significant factor is the pervading ethos of consideration and respect for others, which is a palpable feature of the school.
177. These factors contribute to the high standards and good achievement. Careers education and guidance effectively help pupils prepare for their role as learners and workers. The skills of participation and action are addressed through project work, visits and residential activities. They are enhanced by involvement in charity work and a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Opportunities are provided for pupils to plan and work together and get involved in the life of their school and the local and wider community. For example, pupils in Year 7 are creating a photomontage of Plymouth life and those in Year 9 are engaged in a similar project about a Brittany town. Pupils in Year 8 have been active organisers of lunch-hour activities to raise money for charity.
178. Teaching and learning in the discrete lessons are good. Well-prepared materials are a good springboard for discussion, as demonstrated in a Year 7 lesson on intolerance and bullying. A Year 9 class gained from well-organised group work and the teacher's carefully defined role as a consultant to aid research and hone presentation skills. The excellent mutually supportive atmosphere was a major factor in the good work on racism. Good relationships are a feature of nearly all lessons. Pupils speak enthusiastically of outside speakers who stimulate interest and learning and bring alive topics such as the criminal justice system. Citizenship is also well developed within some subjects. English teaches pupils about the role of the media and the possibility of bias. Geography makes a planned contribution to sustainable development issues and art to awareness of the effects of local graffiti on the local community.

179. There is a new, enthusiastic co-ordinator with good management skills and informed vision. High quality units have been written to implement the curriculum, characterised by a strong focus on pupils playing an active role in learning. Excellent progress has been made on enhancing the School Council as an example of democracy in action. Assessment has begun but pupils are not sure of the criteria that determine success and what to do to reach a higher attainment level. The school is aware of this. It is developing portfolios that will reflect pupils' formal and informal citizenship experiences and inform assessment and future planning.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, ten 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.

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
Biology	6	100	81.6	33.3	33.2	45	33.2
Business Studies	6	83.3	89.1	0	31.7	26.7	35.4
Chemistry	8	100	84.8	37.5	36.9	41.3	35.2
English Literature	9	100	94.4	22.2	37.9	37.8	38.9
Design and Technology	8	87.5	89.2	12.5	32	28.8	35.7
General Studies	7	100	78.6	14.3	25.7	28.6	30
Geography	8	100	88.3	37.5	36.4	42.5	36.3
Information Technology	12	91.7	78.2	25	20.6	33.3	28.5
Mathematics	26	61.5	74.2	11.5	34.3	20.4	31.3
Other Social Studies	6	66.7	83.2	33.3	32.5	28.3	33.6
Sports/PE Studies	13	92.3	88.2	38.5	27.7	40	33.8

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject ¹²	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and Design	10	100	94.5	80	40.4	98	79.1
Biology	16	100	90	62.5	32.3	96.3	70.5
Business Studies	14	100	96.2	21.4	30.6	71.4	75.1
Chemistry	26	100	92.7	69.2	42.4	97.7	78.2
Classical Studies	9	100	97.2	11.1	44.1	62.2	82.9
Communication Studies	9	100	97.6	44.4	31.3	86.7	77.9
Drama	8	100	96.8	37.5	35.1	82.5	78.9
Economics	9	100	96	66.7	44.8	95.6	82.5
English Literature	29	100	97.9	62.1	42.9	96.6	83.3
Design and Technology	9	100	91.9	0	30.6	68.9	70.9
General Studies	103	100	89.3	41.7	28	81.4	68
Geography	26	100	96.4	50	34.9	88.5	77.3
History	30	100	96.9	53.3	38.4	86	79.7
Information Technology	16	100	88.2	25	22.1	71.3	63.3

¹² Only subjects where numbers taking the examination were above six in 2002 are listed.

Mathematics	41	97.6	92.4	58.5	49.8	87.8	82.7
Physics	23	100	92.1	65.2	40.8	95.7	76.9
Sports/PE Studies	13	100	94.5	46.2	24	83.1	69.2

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision for English in the sixth form is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment is very high and progress is good.
- The teaching is very good.
- Students express great satisfaction with their choice of the subject.
- Students progress is well monitored during the course.
- To make full use of the statistical information available to measure progress over the whole course.

Commentary

180. In 2002 standards at A level were well above average. All students attained a pass grade and the percentage of grades A, B and C were all above the national average. The average points scored by students was also well above average. The provisional results for 2003 indicate that attainment was above the national average for 2002, the most recent year for which comparative figures were available. The percentage of grade As was higher than in the previous year but there were also more grade Ds and Es than in 2002, so that overall the average points scored by students was lower in 2003. The lower grades were all attained by students who started the course with prior attainment at GCSE which did not necessarily form a firm basis for study at A level. A full range of evidence seen during the course of the inspection, including analysis of students' work over time and discussion with students, indicates that attainment is well above average.
181. There is a very flexible policy for entry to advanced level English and students start the course with a wide range of prior attainment. While many students have high prior attainment at the start of the course, a significant proportion have prior attainment that does not necessarily provide a firm basis for further study in the subject. Students across the range of prior attainment achieve well and those with high grades at GCSE level achieve well by attaining the higher grades. Those with a less firm basis for "A" level achieve equally well by attaining a pass grade and they derive considerable benefit from being allowed entry to the course.
182. Progress is particularly good in the continued development of a sensitive and mature response to a wide range of literature and in the development of a fluent, balanced written style with which to explore this response. Students make exceptionally good use of discussion to hone and refine their ideas. They make good progress in their understanding of the contextual background and critical response to the texts they study and in understanding how this affects their understanding. They make good use of close textual analysis and reference.
183. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good, with some excellent teaching. One lesson seen was satisfactory. Teachers generally plan their lessons well to meet the varying needs of all students on the course. This includes a high degree of active student contribution to lessons and students make good progress from sharing ideas. The less successful teaching did not meet the wide range of students' needs in the group and had not adapted lesson plans to cope with the fact that there is a wide range of attainment. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge supports students well and increases their confidence in being able to meet A/As level requirements. Teachers' very good use of questioning sets a high level of challenge and

probes and extends students' understanding and response. Students are given very good opportunities to carry out independent research and to arrive at independent interpretations. Teachers give a very clear idea of the requirements of the examination and the criteria by which their work will be assessed.

184. Students express great satisfaction with their choice of English as an A2 level subject and feel that they were given good advice and information in making this decision. They speak warmly of the passion for the subject which teachers communicate to their students and also of their own love of the subject. They feel that any student who experiences difficulty receives good support from teachers and from fellow students, but that students have a clear responsibility to themselves and to each other to keep up with their work and maintain the impetus of their progress.
185. The leadership and management of English in the sixth form are good. The flexible entry policy means that many students are given the opportunity to benefit from further study of the subject. The schemes of work are good and offer good guidance to teachers, although there is some inconsistency in the rigour with which these are adapted to meet the needs of students. The way in which the schemes of work are being used is not monitored sufficiently. There is good, regular tracking of the progress of each student and early identification of potential problem areas. However, the full range of statistical data available is not utilised fully to measure progress during and at the end of the course. This is partly because there is no easy access to the computerised data. There are good opportunities for extra curricular activities, including opportunities for advanced study courses for the more gifted.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

186. Students' standards of literacy are very high, and overall communication skills are significantly above national expectations. Students are skilled listeners and authoritative speakers. They write with style and panache, and debate with confidence and conviction.

Modern foreign languages

Although the focus during the inspection was on French, the Foreign Languages at Work (FLAW) course and German were also sampled. Very small numbers of students have been entered for AS/A2 level German in recent years and standards have been average. In the lessons sampled students were taught well and made good progress.

French

The provision for French in the sixth form is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject leadership is characterised by clarity of vision and a sense of purpose.
- The outstanding programme of visits and work experience placements abroad fosters a spirit of internationalism and promotes students' cultural development.
- Teachers of sixth form classes have a very good command of their subject.
- Students' work is marked very thoroughly, with very good advice on how to improve.
- The take up rates for A/AS level languages courses is low by comparison with other subjects.
- There is an insufficient provision of contemporary foreign language fiction and films that would appeal to sixth form students and develop their language skills.

Commentary

187. In recent years, comparatively small numbers of students have been entered for AS/A2 level French examinations and in both 2002 and 2003, their results were broadly in line with the national average. These students made satisfactory progress and they achieved as well as

those in similar schools. Standards of current work are above average, with larger numbers of students taking the subject and clear evidence that the majority are making good progress in their lessons. The cultural development of students is greatly enhanced by their sense of

belonging to an international community, derived from the programme of work experience and language study visits abroad, including those at the remarkable residential centre at Uzel in Brittany.

188. Students learn well in A/AS level classes because they receive good teaching. Their teachers are strong linguists with a very good command of their subject. Lessons are very well planned to assist students in the difficult transition from GCSE to advanced level work. Teachers skilfully build on prior learning and provide students with clear guidance on grammar and the use of appropriate idiom. As a result of probing question and answer work, they establish what students know and what they need to learn. They have high expectations, conducting lessons almost entirely in French and challenging students through their imaginative teaching to develop their language skills to the highest level. In one lesson, stimulated by a French pop music video, students very convincingly and passionately took on the roles of immigrant family members facing the agonies of separation. Teachers draw very effectively on a wide range of resources to prepare students thoroughly for public examinations. The atmosphere in lessons is congenial and conducive to learning, thanks to the encouragement of teachers and the good humour of students.
189. The subject is in a state of transition and, as a result of very good subject leadership, there is now a clear vision for raising the profile of modern foreign languages in the sixth form. An effective team, with new responsibilities, is well focused on the spreading of good practice and on the better use of achievement data to raise standards. Planning is also in hand to improve the availability of computer equipment to help students with their language learning. There is not enough contemporary foreign language fiction and films pitched at a suitable level for sixth form students, to help them develop their language skills. The sixth form modern foreign languages curriculum is greatly enhanced by the Foreign Languages at Work (FLAW) course in Year 12, with work experience opportunities in France. Since the last inspection, there has been some improvement in the take-up rates of French in the sixth form but the numbers of students taking A/AS level languages courses is still low by comparison with other subjects. There is an evident willingness and capacity in the leadership of the subject to bring about the necessary improvement.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are high in comparison to national averages.
- Students' achievement is excellent.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent and contributes significantly to students' learning.
- Access to appropriate ICT resources is a barrier to further development of student's learning.

Commentary

190. Results over recent years show a steady improvement from a very high base. Students' achievement is excellent and reflects the commitment shown by teachers to ensure all students have access to a mathematically rich environment. For the more able mathematicians the Further Mathematics course remains a success, with many achieving the highest grade.

191. Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to challenge students to think independently and experiment with mathematical ideas. Their highly skilled questioning encourages students to discuss and explore mathematical relationships themselves. As with Years 10 and 11, teachers manage to create a vibrant and lively ethos in which students feel supported, contribute and are encouraged to reach their potential. Excellent use is made of resources, for example to illustrate rotation about a point. Students' thinking and learning are helped considerably by the very good use of visual interpretation of the particular point under discussion. Teaching and learning are very good. Assessment is good. Students are aware of how they are doing and what they have to do to improve. Teachers mark work and provide students with constructive feedback. For example in a Year 12 Further Mathematics lesson the teacher's marking of the homework highlighted the need for further work on solutions of trigonometrical equations. With carefully chosen questions she encouraged them to discuss their methods. Having listened to each other's responses they selected the one that best suited their learning style.
192. The Head of Faculty is a very good leader and effective manager of a very strong team of teachers. At team meetings they consider different approaches to topics and share ideas. This is providing teachers with opportunities to develop further their range of teaching methods.
193. Students' attitudes to the subject are very good. They speak highly of the commitment of the teachers to high standards and the quality of their teaching. The quality of the mathematical language students use is excellent and enhances their learning.

Mathematics across the curriculum

194. Students have very good mathematical skills and use them as appropriate in their various courses.

SCIENCE

Biology was sampled. The provision **is very good**. Teaching, learning and assessment are of a very high quality. Standards are well above national expectations and well above similar selective schools. There is a trend of continuous improvement.

All science subjects share similar very good characteristics.

Chemistry and Physics

The provision is **very good with some excellent features** in both AS and A2 courses.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is of very high quality.
- Students' independent work complements their lessons very well.
- Assessment is of high quality.

Commentary

195. Over three quarters of students in Chemistry and Physics obtain A or B grades at A-level and standards are above those in similar selective schools. Sampling of Biology students' lessons and results reflect similar standards, although these were not the main focus of inspection. The independent work students undertake in Chemistry and Physics complements the content of sixth form lessons very well.
196. Students have access to well-written course guides that direct them to key skills and assessment points. They are confident in using a range of science textbooks, advanced scientific calculators and a range of offered data along with simple research. Data logging is

increasingly used to support investigation and ICT is available in networked laboratories via laptops. The science presented is therefore demanding, co-ordinated and very coherent to students.

197. Sixth form science has seen continuing curriculum expansion along with matching improvements in delivered high-level attainment. These improvements evidence very good teaching and learning which, in a third of lessons seen was observed to be excellent. The characteristics of the high quality teaching are similar to that seen in the main school but set at the appropriate pitch for sixth formers: namely, very clear learning objectives shared directly and overtly with students, precise planning, a brisk pace and a range of methods and approaches to bring about learning.
198. Target-setting in science based on careful analysis of students' performance is well established across the school. In the case of sixth form students this includes the use of the ALIS (Durham University) predictive system and targets are well-focused on specific learning goals. These sit alongside students' self-assessment of their progress. Students reported that they felt very well supported by teacher feedback given and consequently progress in AS and A2 science is very good and sometimes excellent.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

199. AS/A2 level ICT - computing was sampled; a small sample of lessons were observed. The courses are well planned and presented and students' achievement is very good. High grades are achieved.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

200. All students have very good ICT skills and use them to support their learning in their chosen subjects.

HUMANITIES

Classical studies

The provision for both the Latin and classical civilisation courses is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge.
- Very good relationships between students and teachers.
- Teachers have very high expectations so that students work at full stretch.
- Sometimes teachers fail to exploit the interest that students have shown in a particular area.

Commentary

201. In recent years, the standards attained at A level have been below those seen in similar schools, with few students gaining 'A' grades. This was similar to the situation at the last inspection. However, fluctuating numbers in small groups mean that it is difficult to identify significant trends. In the current Year 13, standards in Latin are very good and they are good in classical civilisation. The AS results last year showed that there was an increase in the proportion of 'A' grades that students attained. Several girls from schools within the local consortium are in the Year 12 and 13 Latin groups. Some of the Year 13 students learn Greek at GCSE level to enhance their classical knowledge and appreciate the way that teachers give up time to support them outside the normal teaching day.

202. Sixth form students have a very mature appreciation of the value of learning Latin. Some appreciate how it will enrich their understanding of other languages. The science specialists enjoy the analytical approach, while those who intend to study classics at university find the complete range of language, literature and culture that the subject contains, very rewarding. Those pupils who opt for the subject at A/AS level all have very positive attitudes towards it.

Much of the teaching at this level is very good, with a high level of teacher expertise to which students respond, as they feel confident that they are being taught effectively. Relationships in the groups are very good, and there is mutual respect between teachers and students.

203. Lessons are planned well and the teachers have very high expectations of all students. Questioning is used very effectively, and there is always an element of challenge in lessons to ensure that students are working at full stretch. The teachers extend the vocabulary of students in a well-planned way, particularly by using terms that are used in literary analysis. Written work is set regularly and the careful marking often challenges students to raise their standards further. In many lessons teachers encourage students to explore characters and literary devices in depth. This was especially evident in lessons on the 'Aeneid' of Vergil and Seneca's Letters. In the lesson on Seneca, many moral and cultural issues were explored in a thoughtful and mature way and this contributed very well to the personal development of students' own values. In the lesson on the 'Aeneid', the teacher explored in depth the way that the poet contrasted characters by the language used. This resulted in the students having a heightened awareness of literary devices, especially characterisation. However, although pressure of time means that it is not possible to deal with everything fully, there were occasions when more exploration of areas that the students found stimulating would have been profitable.

Geography

Provision for Geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good attainment at A/S and A2 examinations.
- Very good teaching.
- Very good response from students.

Commentary

204. The subject recruits well into the sixth form and class sizes are large enough to allow discussion, but as there is more than one group, classes are not overcrowded. As competition from other subjects is very high, geography does not recruit many boys who have passed GCSE at A*. The course recruits well and most boys have passed the GCSE at grades A, B and C. Some boys who have passed at grade D are allowed to follow the course, as are some who have not followed the course to GCSE. Attainment on entry is above average. For the small proportion of boys who 'cash in' their A/S results, achievement is good. Results for the A/S course are very well above average. Retention of students into Year 13 is good. Students make good progress in the A2 geography course and high standards have been maintained over time since the last inspection. Results are very well above average and achievement is good throughout the sixth form.
205. Teaching is very good. Lessons are very well planned and resourced by teachers. Teachers are very knowledgeable about the subject and the examination system. They are very enthusiastic about the subject and about their students. Relationships in classes are excellent. The activities chosen for lessons are well matched to students' abilities. This ensures the students are engrossed in their work. The very good teaching and the very good response from the students ensure the high achievement and lead to the results being very

well above average. Students respond well to the challenge set in lessons and are very productive.

206. The curriculum is good in geography and has been updated to ensure its relevance. A good variety of resources is used to very good effect in classrooms, but the present the lack of access to ICT in classrooms hinders its effective use to support learning.
207. The department is well led. Teaching and learning are effective, as is the drive to maintain high standards. The head of faculty monitors effectively teaching and learning. The head of department organises effectively essential functions and is not excessively bureaucratic. The leader is constructively critical of standards and seeks improvement at GCSE and in the sixth form.

Religious education

The subject was sampled.

The quality of provision in religious education is **very good**.

Students respond enthusiastically to an intellectually demanding course, which is very well taught. There is currently no provision at A2 level.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and Technology

Overall provision for design and technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good. Students achieve well in relation to their prior attainment.
- Independent learning and study skills are very good.
- Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, and communicate it effectively.
- Good use is made of innovative technology.
- There is the need for further curricular links with designers and design movements to improve students' design awareness.
- Student numbers are low but increasing.

Commentary

208. Students follow the AS and A2 level GCE courses in systems and product design. In recent years there has been a good pass rate but no students have gained the higher grades. Student numbers are too small to make meaningful comparisons with national averages.
209. Standard of work seen in Years 12 and 13 is average to above. Students have identified interesting design problems and developed original ideas. The design process is followed well, and there is a good standard of graphical presentation in design sheet work. Students develop design briefs and specifications for products that they are designing and making, for example a writing table to go across the arms of an ordinary chair, and a stand for a mountain bike. They understand the importance of giving consideration to the products' performance, aesthetic qualities, method of construction, and value for money. Year 13 students find their design work very interesting and challenging. They appreciate the many good engineering initiatives and links with industry offered by the department, and make best use of them.

210. Students have very positive attitudes to the subject, and have well-developed independent study and research skills. Excellent use is made of innovative resources; ICT is used extensively for graphic work, and computer aided design (CAD) and computer aided manufacture (CAM) use are developing well. Students are very keen to learn about the properties of materials and design concepts and the quality of learning is good. Students are strongly committed to the courses and work hard both in lessons and independently. Students' achievement is very good in relation to their prior attainment and individual capabilities.
211. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Courses are well planned and presented and interesting assignments are set for students. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject, and good knowledge of the examination requirements and assessment criteria. They use new technology effectively. Varied teaching strategies promote interest, and students are encouraged with high quality individual feedback. Teachers are very enthusiastic and student management is excellent. However, in some lessons further student participation, and more question and answer opportunities could promote higher achievement. There are some differences in lesson structure and approach, and low numbers limit student interaction and the sharing of ideas and knowledge. Further project links with designers and design movements, past and present, could support even higher standards, also improve students design awareness, and enhance the engineering dimension of the courses.
212. The courses are well managed and led, there is good teamwork, and shared commitment to raise standards. There is clear vision of how the post-16 design and technology provision needs to progress. Improvements have been made since the previous inspection, and the number of students wishing to join the courses is increasing.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Work in this curriculum area was sampled. In the case of drama and music it was carried out by inspectors endorsed to inspect post-16 provision in that particular discipline and sampling reflected the fact that the numbers of students taking the subject were small and these small departments had been fully inspected in the main school.

Art and Design

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

213. Standards in the sixth form are good. The number of students taking external examinations is currently low which makes comparison with national statistics difficult. Trends indicate improvement, and the work seen indicates that this is likely to continue. Teaching and learning are both very good, with teachers sharing their enthusiasm and skills with pupils, who respond very positively. Pupils are able to talk fluently about their work, and some exciting work was seen.

Drama

The provision for drama is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students develop very good attitudes and engage with the subject with maturity.
- Teaching is skilled and challenges students intellectually and practically.
- Students achieved high grades in their A2 examinations.

Commentary

214. Numbers taking the A2 examination in 2003 were small but students achieved high grades. In 2002 standards were average. Standards in the work seen were above average. Current numbers are also small and it is difficult, therefore, to create a group dynamic – particularly important in, for example, the group project. Current forecasts for the numbers taking the subject show a significant increase.
215. Students approach their work with maturity. They show very good knowledge of theatre practitioners and their particular view of theatre and are able to lead other students in particular exercises that exemplify the practitioner's approach. They are also able to draw parallels with, for example, a scene in *Mother Courage* and use their subject knowledge gained in other subjects, for example history- the rise of Nazism- to inform a character's and, indeed, the audience's dilemma.
216. Teaching is skilled and challenges the students intellectually and practically. A very good relationship is engendered which allows students to explore and experiment yet takes them forward in their thinking and appreciation.

Media communication studies

The provision is **good**.

217. In 2002, standards were above average with nearly half the group gaining B grades. In 2003 a third of the group gained A or B grades but the overall average point score fell significantly. Standards of work seen in lessons are above average. Students are motivated and engaged. Teaching is good. The subject teacher has very good informed subject knowledge. She has an enthusiasm for her subject, which is motivating and a clear understanding of what she needs to do in order to take the subject forward and to raise standards further. Subject targets are set at three quarters of the group gaining A to C grades in the A2 examination. Strategies to achieve this, such as weekly monitoring of independent study, structured revision and monthly monitoring of student progress have been put in place.

Music

The provision for music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of relationships between staff and pupils.
 - The quality of teaching ranged from satisfactory to good.
 - The schemes of work need further refinement to closely reflect syllabus requirements.
221. Of the few pupils entered during the last two years, results have varied reflecting the different capabilities of pupils. Teaching ranged from satisfactory to good. In a Year 12 lesson on chords, pupils were constrained by a lack of practical tasks in a variety of styles and contexts in which to increase their understanding and knowledge of chords. In a Year 13 lesson, pupils demonstrated sound knowledge and understanding of Renaissance polyphony and word setting in a variety of well-chosen excerpts. They were able to discuss subtle differences in performance and interpretation in different recordings and were able to relate this to historical and contextual changes.
222. The department has an open policy of entry into sixth form courses. Teaching should better match the wide range of abilities and interests shown by the pupils. The schemes of work for AS and A2 examinations should be more detailed and linked more closely to syllabus requirements. The use of ICT, particularly for composing tasks, should be encouraged.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education

Overall the provision for physical education is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is excellent and ensures that students make excellent progress.
- Standards in AS and A2 level are well above national averages and above the national average for selective schools.
- Leadership and management are excellent with very effective staff deployment a significant feature.
- Students display very good, often excellent, attitudes and behaviour as a result of excellent relationships.

Commentary

218. In AS and A2 level examinations in 2002 students achieved standards that were well above national averages with a very high percentage of students achieving higher grades. Standards have been consistently well above national averages for the past 5 years. When compared to schools of a similar selective nature standards are above average. Students in the sixth form achieve very well and work to their capacity. They achieve better in physical education than in the other subjects that they take.
219. Standards in Year 12 AS physical education are well above average. Students have excellent knowledge of information processing theories related to the acquisition of skill and use very good subject vocabulary to exemplify the theories. In physiology they have very good knowledge of circulation and can describe spirometer traces and interpret values. In Year 13, standards are well above average. Students are aware of the issues related to factors that affect the nature and development of elite performance and, in discussion, display very good opinions based on very good knowledge. Analysis of work in folders shows that standards are well above average throughout the range of work. Students have good literacy and numeracy skills and produce very good independently written project work and personal exercise plans. Throughout the sixth form achievement is very good.
220. Significant features of the excellent teaching in the sixth form are the quality of teachers' knowledge and the excellent relationships. In lessons, students are mature and show excellent attitudes to learning as a result of very strong relationships and mutual respect between teachers and students. The outstanding quality of teaching ensures that students are challenged and gain knowledge and understanding at a very high level. In all lessons theories are well related to practice and teachers use a good range of styles. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, the teacher provided a range of instruments to enhance students' knowledge of lung capacity. PowerPoint and acetate slide projections enable students to analyse graphs and learn related vocabulary and definitions. In a Year 12 lesson, the many sporting examples given to improve understanding of such concepts as kinaesthetic sense engaged the students and enabled them to make excellent progress.
221. Leadership and management of the subject are excellent. Students are very aware of the standards that they are achieving, as systems to assess their progress are very good. The courses are taught by three teachers who are very effectively deployed to teach to their strengths. A clear vision and direction are provided for the department to improve and bi – annual reviews are carried out. Members of staff are very committed to the excellent range of extra-curricular activities, which provide very good opportunities for talented students. Although accommodation in the new sports hall is excellent and resources are very good, changing and storage areas for equipment and classroom accommodation are poor. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

BUSINESS

In this curriculum area, advanced level courses are taught in economics and business studies. Business studies was inspected in detail and economics lessons were sampled.

In **Economics** the provision is **very good**. The teacher's first-rate subject knowledge and exemplar answers resulted in very good learning, demonstrated through high quality discussions. Lessons were characterised by a range of probing questions from students and the teacher. Standards are well above average, although there are too few A grades. There is good achievement over time compared to prior attainment.

Provision in **business education** is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' extensive subject knowledge and well prepared teaching materials.
- Good assessment procedures.
- Good relationships and support for the students.
- Fundamental issues of status, standards and achievement need to be addressed.
- Too few opportunities for on-going research and active involvement in learning.
- There are too few visits, visitors and curricular links with industry to greatly enhance students' understanding of a living subject.

Commentary

222. Standards had improved since the last inspection and for several years students' performance in the A/AS level examinations was well above the national average. There was a drop in 2002 when results equalled those of other schools. Provisional results for 2003 indicate that this decline has continued. However, in the main, students' attainment is broadly equal to the predictions based on their GCSE examinations and their achievement is satisfactory. On occasions, a few do better. For example, a number of students obtained an unexpected B grade in the 2003 examinations but the majority do not achieve higher grades than predicted. AS results follow a similar pattern. The attainment and achievement of the current students are satisfactory.
223. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Students gain from the teacher's good subject knowledge. Well-chosen and prepared teaching materials promote the progressive increase in knowledge and learning. Students' response is satisfactory but the lack of a variety of teaching strategies means that not all are deeply engaged in the learning process. Teaching does not reflect the needs of students who have not always shone academically. Although students are required to complete some research they are not actively involved in the on-going collection, analysis and presentation of relevant and current information. A stronger focus on key learning points in lessons would improve standards. Relationships and assessment are good and teachers offer pertinent advice on an individual basis, thereby improving achievement. Students are appreciative of this help and comment favourably on the good use of ICT to enhance their understanding of basic concepts such as cash flow analysis. A scrutiny of students' work indicates that there is not a consistently rigorous approach to evaluating the links between various aspects of business behaviour throughout the course. The organisation and content of files does not always aid learning for all.
224. The management and leadership of business education are satisfactory, as are improvements since the last inspection. This reflects a balance of strengths and areas that require development. Management and resources are no longer unsatisfactory and aspects such as day-to-day administration are good. Training courses are well attended. Schemes of work cover the course requirements well but there are too few detailed references to new curriculum developments such as citizenship. A lack of visits and visitors and means that important opportunities to enliven and extend learning are missed. ICT now supports business

education well but its use could still be extended by a more detailed reference to web sites. Annotated reading lists and strong links with the library do not support the development of independent learning skills. There is not a business education and enterprise base that would help raise the status of business studies and the subject does not have a high profile for involvement in national competitions and initiatives. The head of department has already acted to implement some new approaches.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

General studies

Provision in general studies is **very good**.

Standards are **very good as is achievement**. An excellent range of visiting speakers stimulates interest, as does the high quality of teaching.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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