

INSPECTION REPORT

MARLING SCHOOL

Stroud

LEA area: Gloucestershire

Unique reference number: 115752

Headteacher: Mr R Lock

Lead inspector: Eveleen Gillmon

Dates of inspection: 01 - 05 March 2004

Inspection number: 259175

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:	778
School address:	Cainscross Road Stroud Gloucestershire
Postcode:	GL5 4HE
Telephone number:	01453 762251
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs J Varley
Date of previous inspection:	09/03/1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Marling school is an 11-18 boys' selective foundation school situated on the outskirts of Stroud. It is smaller than other secondary schools, having 778 pupils. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is well below average, as is the proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. The majority of its pupils come from the town of Stroud and surrounding villages, drawing on more than 40 primary schools. Attainment on entry is above national averages and at the lower end of the local education authority profile for similar schools. The number of pupils from ethnic minority groups is very low, as is the number for whom English is not their first language. The school has a collaborative arrangement with its neighbour girls' school, Stroud High School, within an emerging consortium involving Archway School and Stroud Further Education College, thus providing a wider range of choice at post-16 than it could provide on its own. Retention in the joint sixth form is very high.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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10308	John Paddick	Team inspector	Mathematics (post-16)
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31192	John Stewart	Team inspector	Physical education
3121	Celia Holland	Team inspector	Music
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Marling School is a very good school. It provides a very good quality of education for boys, within an ethos of mutual high expectations and respect. External examination results at the ages of 14 and 16 are well above national averages and represent good achievement. Results of sixth form study are also well above average, but represent less value added in some subjects. Pupils' attitudes to and awareness of their own learning are very good and the teaching is predominantly very good. **The school provides good value for money,** but has been unsuccessful, historically and in more recent years in upgrading the very poor quality of much of its physical environment which greatly detracts from the quality of life on a day-to-day basis. The school was last inspected in 1998.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Very good teaching leading to high standards of achievement
- A developing self-evaluation culture involving pupils, staff and parents
- A positive ethos within which pupils demonstrate mature attitudes to learning and achievement and responsible behaviour towards their peers and others
- Strong commitment of governors and management team to collaborative partnership in developing the sixth form
- Statutory requirements in relation to the provision of religious education and a daily collective act of worship are not met
- Governance is unsatisfactory
- Leadership and management of the joint 'virtual' sixth form is unsatisfactory

The school has made good improvement since its last inspection in 1998. The key issues raised have been addressed, but the school still does not meet the requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Year 11 and Year 13 results

Performance in GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2003	2002	2001	2003
	A	A*	A*	E
Performance in A Level examinations at the end of Year 13 compared with	A	A	A*	

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
Similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9*

Standards attained in all years and in most subjects are above average and frequently well above. When compared with other selective boys' schools, however, the standards are below the average at GCSE level. The great majority of pupils achieve well in relation to their capabilities and their prior attainment in national tests at the end of Year 6. By the end of Year 9, they have made significant progress. The well-above average attainment at GCSE represents good achievement although the value added between the ages of 14 and 16 is lower than the average for schools which attained similar average points scores at the end of Year 9. Pupils with special educational needs achieve and make progress in line with their peers. At A level, attainment is well above average.

Pupils' attitudes, behaviour, social development and attendance are very good. Their attendance record is well above average and they are generally punctual to school and to lessons. The boys respond well to the close-knit 'family' ethos of the school. They demonstrate confidence

and mature attitudes in their demeanour around adults and between peers. They have a strong sense of right and wrong. The school promotes high standards of respect for individuals, self-evaluation and encouragement of learning to which the boys respond positively.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching and learning outcomes are very good overall. Examples of excellent teaching were observed in design technology, chemistry, modern languages, mathematics and music. Examples of very effective teaching were also consistently observed in English, mathematics, science and physical education. Younger pupils are able to discuss their learning styles and progress at an unusually high level of sophistication, aided by the school's academic monitoring procedures. The curriculum generally meets the National Curriculum requirements but the provision for religious education is unsatisfactory, particularly in Years 10 and 11 and it does not meet statutory requirements in the sixth form.

The provision for pupils' care, and welfare is good, and the school involves them very well in seeking and acting on their views. The provision of support, advice and guidance, based on monitoring of pupils' achievement, is good, although the limited careers advice available does not meet the needs of all pupils and greater attention to health and safety issues is needed. **Links with parents are very good** and the school is actively seeking to increase and develop good working relationship with other schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good overall. The headteacher provides clear direction for the school and is leading the management of change with determination and pace, whilst at the same time being mindful of securing its academic standards. He is supported by a strong and committed senior management team which provides appropriate challenge and stimulus in relation to the wide number of initiatives which the school has embraced in recent years. Day-to-day operations within the school are efficiently organised, but there is a need for greater attention to detail in some aspects of management. The quality of middle management is very good. Governors are supportive but need to be much more rigorous in monitoring their statutory responsibilities.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents show strong support for the school. The great majority consider that the school is well led and managed. They have concerns about the developing co-educational sixth form and the physical environment of the school. Marling boys are very positive about the school and recognize the high quality teaching that they receive.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- instigate systematic procedures to secure the oversight of all health and safety aspects around the school site
 - sharpen up the governors' procedures for monitoring their responsibilities
 - improve the fabric of the existing buildings as a matter of urgency
 - develop clearer communication channels between senior management and other staff
- and in the sixth form*
- improve the quality of leadership and management of the combined sixth form, Downfield.
 - develop strategies for the raising of boys' achievement within mixed teaching groups
- and, to meet statutory requirements:*
- secure appropriate provision for religious education in Years 10-11 and in the sixth form
 - comply with the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship and provide all staff with appropriate guidance
 - comply with the requirement to have a trained child protection officer on the school site.

THE JOINT SIXTH FORM AT DOWNFIELD

The joint sixth form has 435 students. It is larger than other sixth forms and is increasing in size. Provision is enhanced by a consortium partnership with Archway School and Stroud Further Education College.

OVERALL EVALUATION

Overall, provision in the sixth form is satisfactory. The sixth form provides well for its current students through a range of 35 courses leading to AS level and A level. It also provides a positive environment for their personal and social development. Teaching in the sixth form is very good and students learn very effectively as a result. Academic success has contributed to the growing popularity of the sixth form. In 2002 and 2003, the females achieved well in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE but the males gained relatively less value added on their GCSE performance. However, the A level results of both males and females were well above the national average and the gender gap in this sixth form is significantly less than that nationally.

The sixth form is **cost-effective**. The joint sixth form was not in place at the time of the last inspection. The development of Downfield represents satisfactory improvement in provision.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards in examination that are well above average
- The very good quality of teaching that supports very good learning
- The good range of academic courses
- Students demonstrate maturity in their approach to all aspects of school life and show enthusiasm for their academic work
- Value added gains are less for males than for females
- The study accommodation provided for the use of the sixth form students is inadequate
- Statutory requirements with respect to the provision of religious education and a collective act of worship are not met
- The leadership of the governors and the two headteachers has been unsatisfactory because they have failed to establish a clear mutual vision and sound working infrastructure for Downfield sixth form

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected, but a number of subjects were sampled.

CURRICULUM AREA	EVALUATION
English	Provision is very good. Standards are very high because students are taught very well. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and make lessons stimulating and challenging. Students are enthusiastic and work hard but the range of activity is sometimes limited by the poor accommodation.
Mathematics	Provision is good. Standards are well above average and rising. Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well.
Biology	Provision is very good. Students achieve very well because of the high quality of teaching in this increasingly popular subject.
Chemistry:	Provision is good. Good teaching leads to satisfactory achievement for the majority of students. Very good attitudes assist students' learning.
Physics	Provision is good. Good teaching characterised by high levels of support leads to standards that are in line with national averages. Students' attitudes are excellent.

Psychology	Provision is very good. Enthusiastic teaching by highly qualified teachers promotes good achievement. Students' very good attitudes contribute significantly to their progress.
Information and communication technology	Provision is satisfactory. Examination results are at the national average and achievement is satisfactory. Standards seen are good overall with male students performing particularly well.
History	Provision is very good. Very good teaching, with a clear emphasis on meeting examination requirements and assessment criteria, promotes well above average standards and good achievement.
Geography	Provision is good. Female students are achieving well and standards overall are above average. More students are choosing to study the subject and the joint leadership is effective.
Politics and government	Provision is excellent. Very good leadership, teaching and learning has produced excellent standards and student attitudes.
Art and Design	Provision is good. Very good teaching leads to good learning outcomes, except where unclear leadership impacts on achievement.
Business Education	Provision is good. Standards have improved and are now above average because of the good quality of teaching and learning.

The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Sixth form managers provide a good quality of support and guidance in Years 12 and 13. Information about sixth form courses is good and students are very well prepared for the requirements of AS level and A level courses. The quality of advice offered in preparation for university entry is good. There are very good reporting and review procedures.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the sixth form is unsatisfactory. There has been an historic failure on the part of the governors and two headteachers to establish a mutual vision and effective infrastructure for the combined sixth form. The recently appointed sixth form co-ordinator has suffered from ill health and lacks the remit to provide strategic leadership. Day-to-day administration is effective.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are positive about the sixth form, the range of subjects offered, the quality of teaching and the level of support they receive. The strengths they have identified are justified. They do have concerns about the conflicting advice they receive resulting from the lack of clarity in the overall leadership and management of the sixth form.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils at Marling School consistently attain above average and well above average standards in external examinations at the end of Key Stages 3 and 4. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher grades in GCSE examinations in 2002 and 2003 was well above the national average, although in comparison with other pupils' selective schools it was below average in both years. A rising trend has been noted over the past four years, and inspectors found that pupils currently at the school demonstrated good achievement relevant to their prior attainment.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A consistently rising trend in standards in all key stages and all subjects
- High value added from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3
- GCSE results well above the national average, but below the average for selective boys' schools, particularly in relation to the higher grades
- Underachievement in some subjects in the sixth form relative to previous GCSE attainment

Commentary

KEY STAGE 3

1. The attainment of pupils entering the school in Year 7 is above the national average, but lower than that recorded by other selective boys' schools in the immediate locality. The school's results in the end of Year 9 national tests have been above average in recent years and have improved at a faster rate than that nationally. In 2003, the pupils attained an overall average points score which was well above the national average.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2003 (the latest year for which comparative results were available at the time of the inspection)

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	42.1 (41.2)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	46.0 (45.9)	35.4 (34.7)
science	42.0 (43.2)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 123 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Pupils make good progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science in this key stage. Standards observed during lessons and in the sampling of pupils' work matched the test and examination results. Achievement above expectation was observed in some lessons including English, mathematics, science and physical education. Standards in other subjects were considered to be in line with expectation relative to age and stage of the course.

KEY STAGE 4

3. GCSE results were well above the national average in 2003, with 94% of pupils achieving 5+ A*-C grades, but the number achieving the higher A*-B grades was below that of other selective schools, reflecting the school's relatively broader profile on entry.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003 (the latest year for which comparative results were available at the time of the inspection)

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	94 (94)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	98 (100)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	49.7 (34.7)	48.5 (34.7)

There were 71 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. GCSE results in recent years have fluctuated slightly, but there has been a rising trend overall at a rate in excess of the national trend. In 2002 and 2003, they were well above those of similar schools nationally, with the rise in pupils' average points score exceeding the national trend, although remaining at the lower end of the selective pupils' school profile. The school sets challenging but realistic targets. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs and pupils from ethnic minorities is consistent with overall achievement.

Joint Sixth Form with Stroud High School

5. In 2002 and 2003, A level results were well above the national and local education authority averages. 58% of candidates achieved A-B grades in 2003, with female students achieving a higher average point score than males in both years. Nevertheless, the gap is less than that observed nationally, and males exceeded the average for males by a greater margin than that of the females over females nationally. AS results reflect a similar pattern of gender disparity. In comparison with individual prior attainment, there has been evidence of underachievement in some subjects by males. The school has recognized the situation, and a number of strategies aimed at reversing this pattern are currently being explored. Standards of work seen during the inspection were very good. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is not the first language achieve and progress in line with their peers. Standards of literacy, numeracy and communication skills are well above national expectations, and the independent use of ICT by students is very good.

Standards in GCE A level examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2003 (Joint Sixth Form with Stroud High School)

Males only	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	98.0 (99.2)	97.1 (97.1)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	52.9 (47.1)	38.4 (37.6)
Average point score per pupil	298.1	246.3

There were 66 males in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Females only	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	95 (97)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	51 (62.3)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per pupil	312.2	268.7

There were 106 females in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attitudes to school and behaviour are both very good. Attendance is very good and punctuality is good. Provision for pupils' personal development is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are very interested in school life and the range of opportunities provided and often work hard in lessons
- Pupils are very willing to take responsibility
- The school stimulates a desire to learn very well
- The school sets high expectations for pupils' conduct
- There is a strong charity support ethos emerging in the school
- Knowledge of cultural diversity is not sufficiently promoted

Commentary

6. Pupils are cheerful around the school and tolerate the poor state of many of the buildings in a positive and mature way. These positive attitudes are also reflected in the enthusiasm they give to lessons. They are keen to do well and accomplish tasks at a very good work rate in many subjects. Pupils are open to each other's suggestions and work well collaboratively. Behaviour follows this very positive pattern. It is at its best in the classroom and contributes well to the success of most lessons. The level of exclusions is low. They are very willing to take responsibility and be helpful in the running of the school and in organising events.
7. Another contributing factor to the very positive attitudes is the way pupils' interest in learning is stimulated. In the younger age groups a programme developing pupils' understanding of learning styles is a significant contributor to promoting learning. In the older age groups a well-developed mentoring system, involving several staff including the headteacher, has had a positive impact on pupils' self-confidence. Both of these programmes provide pupils with a level of self-awareness which contributes well to the spiritual aspect of their personal development as well as the sense of sharing in a community.
8. The school sets high expectations for pupils' conduct and has constructive mechanisms in place to secure these. For example, a classroom charter of behaviour and expectations has recently been drawn up in consultation with the School Council. If bullying occurs it is dealt with very effectively by the school. These factors set a clear moral tone and contribute to a corporate ethos of inclusiveness. The wide range of sporting events and achievements which continue on to the sixth form, are also a marked feature of the school and help to foster a strong sense of identity.
9. Several local charities are supported by the school which encourages an emerging community spirit and a clear moral sense of priorities. There are good opportunities to experience European culture; for example, an annual trip to Lourdes, where pupils are involved in a Roman Catholic charity link. However although some opportunities for the understanding of cultures beyond that of western Europe do exist – most notably the supporting of a girl's education in Africa through a charity fund and the annual Bolivian charity fundraising – these opportunities are rare across the curriculum and in assemblies. This means that pupils are not being adequately prepared for the multi-ethnic, multicultural society that exists in most modern British cities.
10. Attendance is very good in comparison with the national average and there are no unauthorised absences. Compared with other grammar schools, attendance is broadly average. The school generates an ethos of the importance of attendance well through its rewards programme and through regular reminders to parents. The latter make very good efforts to help ensure their children attend and the few latecomers in the morning are usually late because of known road or traffic-related reasons. This ensures a prompt start to the school day. Punctuality in lessons is good. Given the nature of the long site and its current obtrusive building works this reflects the very positive pupil attitudes.

Joint Sixth Form with Stroud High School

11. Students' behaviour and attitudes to school are very good. Attendance is very good and punctuality is good, despite problems of movement created by a vast two-school site. Most students value the right to be considered for prefect status. However, there is a significant gender imbalance in favour of females. Male students report a reluctance to assume these responsibilities because they prefer to spend more time in the girls' school where facilities are considered to be superior.
12. The personal development of students is satisfactory. Students may choose to assume responsibilities and to contribute to the development of the whole school. Some enrichment activities such as World Challenge and Young Enterprise attract a good following. However, the range of extra-curricular activities on offer to students is not extensive.
13. In response to a questionnaire, the great majority of students said they would recommend the sixth form. Those students joining the school in Year 12 are provided with good levels of support. Induction arrangements are satisfactory.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	6.6
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	1.1

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
514	5	0
225	1	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall education provided by the school is very good because teaching, learning, the curriculum, assessment, support and guidance are all effective and enable pupils to achieve well. There are some areas of provision in need of development, but no major shortcomings in provision. Leadership is focused on raising standards, development of teaching and promotion of learning and the management processes support the school's aims well. A good range of extra-curricular activities contributes not only to the standards attained but also to the quality of school life.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. Pupils make gains in learning because of the expertise and knowledge of their teachers, their own good attitudes towards learning and effective assessment of their progress in learning.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The emphasis placed on pupil understanding about their own learning
- Teaching is mainly good and often very good
- The assessment and progress reporting system contributes to effective learning and achievement
- Planning for the assessment of ICT capability within subjects across the curriculum is weak
- The use of ICT to support teaching and learning is in need of further development, particularly in geography

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 167 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
8 (5%)	76 (45%)	62 (37%)	20 (12%)	1 (1%)	0	0

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

14. Marling boys are very good learners. They are articulate, curious and willing to learn. As a result, teaching is focused and effective, leading to very good standards of attainment. They are strongly supported by their parents who take an active interest in their progress and form good partnerships with teachers to promote this. Good and very good teaching was observed in 87 per cent of lessons overall, and some excellent teaching was observed in design technology, chemistry, and modern languages where well-planned, fast-paced lessons stimulated pupil response and challenged their thinking. The majority of teachers respond to individual needs by adapting teaching strategies or resources. Some very good teaching was seen in most subjects, reflecting the impact of the school's internal professional development initiatives. This was most evident in Years 7-9. Of those lessons which were just satisfactory, weaknesses in planning, including lack of differentiation, reduced the effectiveness of the teaching. In these lessons, learning objectives were not always made clear to pupils, and in some cases there was insufficient challenge or extension for more able pupils. On occasions disruptive behaviour by a very small minority of pupils reduced the learning of others within a lesson.

Joint Sixth Form with Stroud High School

15. The overall standard of teaching and learning in the sixth form is very good. Teachers have high expectations, plan well and set clear objectives for their students. They use their own very good subject expertise to enliven lessons and engage them. Tasks, including homework, are appropriate and supported by very good use of resources. Assessment is used effectively and students are well supported in setting individual targets for improvement. Reporting to parents is thorough and includes parents' evenings.
16. In addition to the subjects which were the focus of the inspection, a number were sampled in other departments including design technology, French, music, and religious education. Teaching and learning in all of these subjects was of very good leading to very good standards overall.

The curriculum

The curriculum provision is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A broad range of appropriate opportunities within a flexible framework

- The wide range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities in the main school
- Unsatisfactory provision for religious education in Years 10-11 and the sixth form
- Aspects of assessment in ICT and citizenship are not yet fully in place
- A poor learning environment exists in many areas

Commentary

17. There is a broad and balanced curriculum in Key Stage 3 in line with the National Curriculum. All Year 7 pupils study French and have an opportunity to have a modern language taster course in German, Spanish and Latin before selecting two languages in Years 8 and 9. There is a fast track group for higher attaining pupils in Years 8 and 9 in Mathematics, English, science and modern languages and it is planned to carry this through to Years 10 and 11 next year. An innovative module of study in Years 7 and 8, known as 'The Event'¹, is delivered by the pastoral teams. This programme develops pupils' awareness of individual learning styles and is having a positive effect on learning and pupil progress. The statutory provision for citizenship has not been formally agreed in Years 7-9 and the proposed system of recording progress and reporting to parents on this requires further development.
18. Key Stage 4 provides a balance between core subjects and options, and pupils and their parents are offered guidance on choice through meetings with teachers. There are no requirements for pupils to take humanities or creative arts in Years 10 and 11. The provision of time for religious education, however, is insufficient to enable adequate coverage of the locally agreed syllabus. Where pupils have not chosen ICT as a GCSE option, the provision in ICT also does not comply with the National Curriculum entitlement. Pupils with SEN have full access to the curriculum, and there is a coherent programme of personal, social and health education including careers education and citizenship.
19. Extra-curricular activities are a strength of the school with a variety of enrichment activities for the pupils. There is a good participation rate and all activities are published in the weekly Bulletin. The school is represented on the Gloucestershire Youth Council and many pupils are involved in The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme. The school has now been involved in World Challenge for a number of years and last year students from the sixth form visited Zambia and undertook community work. There are a variety of clubs including chess, Christian Union, ICT and art. School visits are arranged on a faculty basis including modern languages visits and exchanges to Europe. The music department has a range of activities including Marling Voices, Downfielders Folk Band, a jazz band, wind band, senior orchestra and a junior choir. Participation in sport is high with a large number of teams in football, rugby, hockey and basketball as well as additional clubs such as fencing, running, skiing and badminton. Extra-curricular sport during lunchtime and after school is well supported by the staff and the school uses outside coaches for some of the sports. Year 10 and 11 pupils are encouraged to become involved in the Junior Sports Leader Award. The wide range of opportunities available at the school has enhanced learning and supported the positive ethos in the school.
20. The quality of much of the accommodation is unsatisfactory and, although there is insufficient evidence to suggest that this is having a significantly adverse effect on teaching and learning, the quality of the overall environment is unacceptable in comparison with other schools. There is limited space in some subject areas such as drama, art and religious studies. Classrooms are generally spacious but the fabric and decoration of many rooms are degrading for both teachers and pupils. This is exacerbated by deficiencies such as health and safety issues related to windows, lights and blinds in the classrooms. Attractive display work with good examples of pupils' work sometimes camouflages the state of the accommodation, and the heroic efforts of individual teachers to improve the learning environment are notable. The school should take steps to improve the fabric of the school and its environs so that it is line with the high achievement of the pupils. Access to computers is difficult for many departments and there is a need to increase the ICT facilities to support the curriculum. There is sufficient

¹ See page 17 for more detail

specialist staff to meet the needs of the curriculum and the number of support staff is satisfactory.

Example outstanding practice

“THE EVENT”

A programme to improve pupils’ attitudes to learning and raise their awareness of different learning styles is having a significant impact on the achievement of boys, particularly in Years 7 to 9.

This six-part programme centres around the development of Year 7 and Year 8 pupils’ awareness of their own learning styles, how to exploit them, and how to strengthen those aspects of learning which come least easily to them. It extends into Year 8 and Year 9 with an introduction to the theory of multiple intelligences. As pupils mature and develop their understanding about the nature of learning, they are provided with additional guidance on how to adapt their learning styles to such matters as study, revision for examinations, and coursework completion.

The programme takes the form of a plenary input with good visual stimulus, followed by smaller group activities and discussion in tutorial groups, and is paired with the school’s PSHE programme. Linked with an effective target setting and academic monitoring process it has had a significant impact on pupils’ attitudes towards learning.

Joint Sixth Form with Stroud High School

21. A good range of AS and A level courses are provided jointly with Stroud High School and the teaching is shared between the schools in the majority of subjects. Recent additions to the curriculum include AS levels in critical thinking, law and general studies. The range of vocational courses offered on the joint campus is limited, but through partnership with a wider consortium - comprising a comprehensive school and a further education college - vocational courses are also offered. The quality of extra-curricular opportunities is also good, with many students involved in enrichment activities and actively contributing to charity work. Study facilities for students are currently inadequate, and the sixth form common room does not meet health and safety standards. A new study centre scheduled to open in September 2004 will enhance provision, but many teaching areas are in urgent need of upgrading. Staffing and resources in the joint sixth form are good.
22. The school is in breach of statutory curriculum requirements with respect to the provision of religious education in the sixth form. There is no act of collective worship, but provision for moral, social and cultural development is good.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for pupils’ care, welfare and health and safety is satisfactory. The support, advice and guidance they receive based on monitoring is good. Involvement through seeking and acting on pupils’ views is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have good trusting relationships with adults in the school
- Pupils receive very well-informed support, advice and guidance on their learning
- Careers advice is limited
- Child protection and health and safety procedures are unsatisfactory
- The number of health and safety risks around the site is unacceptably high

Commentary

23. Child protection procedures are well-known by staff and shared clearly in the staff handbook but they are technically unsatisfactory because no member of staff is currently fully trained. Health and safety procedures are also unsatisfactory because of the out-of-date annual portable appliance check and other failures to adequately assess risk. Although a changeover

in staff and responsibilities is the principal reason for this, the school has not moved quickly enough to bring in an outside agency to temporarily cover this deficit. There is a high number of risks around the site due both to the dilapidation of many of the old buildings and the construction of the new ones. Examples range from the rotting sash-window cords in the 'Gallipoli' building – which means that windows must now be kept shut, causing uncomfortable overheating in the classrooms - to certain areas of paving coated in slippery mud, and a canteen building which, whilst providing high quality food, is of a standard demeaning to its occupants. First aid is well-organised and efficient, an improvement since the previous inspection.

24. Advice pupils receive concerning their welfare and their more general personal development is good. Celebration of achievement and the sanctions programme are consistently applied across the school and the good relationships between most staff and pupils ensure this. Pupils feel happy that they have at least one or more adult to turn to. Notably this includes the headteacher who participates in the very good mentoring programme for older pupils, a system in which pupils choose their mentor from a list of staff.
25. Guidance they receive based on academic monitoring is also good because of the well developed and very effective tracking system of pupil effort and achievement. This works very well to encourage high performance because it is clear, simple and consistent across all age groups, and it is frequently reported to parents. This helps to generate a high level of self-awareness amongst pupils as to where they are going and how they can improve.
26. The ethos of listening to and acting on pupils' views so that they are formally involved in the school's development is well established and reflects a strongly inclusive tone throughout. The school council has developed quickly and enthusiastically; it is effectively structured and one of its members is also the Youth member of Parliament for the Stroud and Cotswold ward. It has effected some changes in the school already - for example, following a questionnaire on the quality of the food served in the canteen, changes to the menu were made. However it is still in its infancy. The school also carries out a very useful, detailed exit questionnaire of pupils in Year 11 which informs planning for the following year's pupils.

Joint Sixth Form with Stroud High School

27. Good relationships within the sixth form are a significant factor in the quality of pastoral support. The support advice and guidance they receive, based on monitoring, is good. Involvement through seeking and acting on students' views is good, but communication between the schools is not always effective. Many students feel that there is a lack of coherence within the joint sixth form which is reflected in inconsistent policies and procedures, including expectations and sanctions. Guidance on university entrance is particularly effective and highly valued by students.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has very good links with parents. Links with the community are good and links with other schools and colleges are good. Parents have very positive views about the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Information provided for parents is good
- Frequent direct contact with parents through evening meetings
- The seeking of parents' views is very good
- Response to concerns and complaints is very good

Commentary

28. Parents are kept very well-informed about their children's progress through the carefully worked out programme of reporting in each year. This reflects the school's own very good tracking of personal development as well as academic monitoring. Intermediate reporting sheets giving pupil grades are released every half-term throughout the year. Annual reports are concise and sharp with very good prompts on what the pupil needs to do to improve. Curriculum information is explained well. Homework is consistently given and regularly marked and monitored.
29. The very good provision of parent evenings also helps parents to be involved in their children's work. They are tailored to suit the needs of the different year groups. The different 'settling-in' needs of both Years 7 and 10 are clearly targeted and Year 9 pupils, sitting their end-of-key-stage tests, are given an extra evening of guidance on choices for Years 10 and 11 over and above the two usual ones, which in itself is greater than many schools.
30. Parents are consulted regularly and their views are valued and acted on very well. A very detailed and exemplary questionnaire is used as the basis for analysing parents' views. Listening to parents and pupils is becoming a key feature of the ethos of the school. The parents' very positive views of the school expressed in the parent questionnaires are well illustrated by their comments on how well the school deals with their concerns and complaints. The school's approachability and procedures for dealing with these are very good. They stem mainly from the headteacher's principled determination to give them priority. A clear structure is in place through the various levels of management which means concerns are efficiently dealt with. At the same time parents are given a direct email link to the headteacher should they wish to go 'straight to the top'. As a result few parents have concerns and the school has the confidence of all the communities it serves.
31. The Special Education Needs Co-ordinator involves parents effectively in the education of their children. She maintains good liaison records. Most parents are responsive and appreciate the assistance offered by the school; this is especially true where a pupil's special needs are identified for the first time.
32. The school has good links with the community. Many of the local charities are supported by pupils' fund-raising efforts. The very active Parents School Association regularly holds events which provide a steady supply of funds for the school. Funds raised have gone towards both local charity and the school, as for example towards the building of the Sports Hall. There is a regular grand fireworks display on the playing fields organised in association with the local Rotary Club. Some links extend to other nearby communities, notably Nailsworth, which no longer has a secondary school, where pupils regularly contribute articles to the local newspaper. However there are few links with local business although a promising new initiative by the headteacher to keep businesses informed about the school and education matters has just been established.
33. Links with other schools and colleges are generally good, as evidenced by the consortium partnership in the sixth form. There are numerous sports fixtures played with a large number of schools, including independent schools. Links with primary schools are satisfactory, involving staff training and information sharing and these are being extended. Unusually there are no direct university links.

Joint Sixth Form with Stroud High School

34. Parents expressed very positive views about the education their children receive in the sixth form. Communications are very good. Meetings are held regularly and well attended. Parents receive a very good level of information about the progress being made by their children.
35. Good links exist with other sixth forms, especially those in the consortium. However, there is scope to contribute more actively to wider partnerships, especially those involving work-related learning and links with local businesses and universities.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school is **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has a strongly developing self-evaluative culture
- Effective monitoring procedures are in place through clear lines of departmental accountability
- The middle management tier is very effective
- The senior management team is dynamic and forward looking
- Communication channels between senior management and other staff are in need of improvement
- The governing body does not monitor statutory compliance with sufficient rigour and its practice and procedures are insufficiently robust to hold the school to account

Commentary

36. Leadership and management in this school has a strongly human face, underpinned by efficient and rigorous monitoring of performance. The head teacher and senior management team have succeeded in combining a strong concern for the welfare of staff and pupils with the promotion of a self-analytical and reflective professional attitude.
37. Governors are supportive of and loyal to the school, but lack the necessary skills and rigour to hold its leaders adequately to account. They share the headteacher's strong vision for the school's future and are endeavouring to take a strategic approach to forward planning. The rate of progress on this has been delayed by a succession of former and recent occurrences, including changes within the governing body itself. Governors are aware of and promote the school's strengths but they are less focused on some of the areas for development. There is a range of governance experience and expertise amongst governors which is deployed throughout a committee structure, but greater rigour is needed in using these mechanisms to good effect. In particular, there is a need to ensure that there is follow-through in matters raised and clarity in relation to action expected. They seek to ensure that the school meets its statutory obligations, but they do not adequately hold the school managers to account for the quality of some curricular provision. Although a system of designating link governors with individual departments exists, this is at best an ad hoc relationship which adds little value to the school's performance or to the governors' monitoring processes. Improvement in governance since the previous inspection has therefore been unsatisfactory.
38. The statutory requirement to hold a daily collective act of worship is not met in the sense that it is limited to a twice-weekly assembly and although the content is usually within the spirit of the law, it is not participative or overtly religious. Some staff are unaware of the legislative requirement and no guidance is provided nor are records kept about the themes covered in assemblies. It was the view of the inspection team that the assemblies, while strongly moral in tone and of good quality in themselves, did not succeed in providing an appropriate quality collective worship opportunity. Further minor shortcomings in connection with statutory provision were observed within ICT, citizenship and religious education, but overall the governors have endeavoured to ensure that the statutory curriculum requirements are met. With regard to other aspects, however, such as child protection and health and safety, there are further breaches and this is why more rigour is required in pursuing a systematic monitoring of statutory responsibilities.
39. The governors have a strong sense of the aspirations of parents and a determination to safeguard high academic standards. They are sensitive and responsive to parents' concerns. They seek to work in close partnership with the governors of the adjoining girls' school, and have established joint working groups in regard to the co-educational sixth form. As with other governance procedures, greater rigour and systematic planning will be required if the aims of the joint partnership are to be fulfilled.

40. The head teacher has a clear vision for the school he leads. His very personal style lends itself to the strongly 'family' feel of this school. He is committed to maintaining and improving standards whilst at the same time introducing new pedagogical approaches to move the school forward. His enthusiasm is infectious, and for those who choose to follow his lead there are multiple opportunities for professional development. The implications of some management decisions and how they are communicated to other staff is not, however, always managed well.
41. The school's senior management team supports the head teacher very well and is committed to the future development of an already high achieving school. They manage the school effectively on a day-to-day basis, and are meticulous in planning, monitoring and holding staff and pupils to account. A developing use of pupil progress data by all staff underpins this work well. The introduction of performance management is not yet fully established, but there is evidence that this process is being effectively linked to strategic whole-school professional development issues, as well as the support of individuals. Middle managers perform their roles well. The very clear lines of accountability enable this, although the limited amount of time available to some staff with pastoral responsibilities reduces their effectiveness. Other aspects of management are less well attended to, as for example in supervision of maintenance and health and safety checks. A more systematic and vigorous approach to the management of the school's overall fabric, and to the securing of a quality learning environment is necessary.
42. Governors and successive head teachers have been unsuccessful in securing adequate capital funding to maintain and improve the fabric of the school over very many years, despite innumerable applications to local and national bodies. This has now become an urgent imperative and although there are current projects in hand – namely the building of a sixth form resource centre and the re-building of the design technology block destroyed by fire – the attention of governors and the head teacher should not be deflected from improving the core buildings of the school, both internally and externally.
43. Financial control and management is good. Effective checks on departmental expenditure are in place. The principles of best value are well understood and applied. The school provides very good value for money because its income is at the lower end of the LEA expenditure profile and it secures very good results for its pupils in spite of a very poor working environment.
44. Since the last inspection, Marling School has maintained its high standards of teaching and learning and made good progress. Most issues raised at the time of the previous inspection have been addressed, although the provision of religious education in Years 10 and 11 is still restricted and the collective act of worship is not held.

Joint Sixth Form with Stroud High School

45. The leadership of the governors and two head teachers has failed to provide a clear mutual vision and a sound infrastructure in respect of the joint sixth form development and is therefore unsatisfactory. Statutory requirements for collective worship and religious education are not met. Although, the joint steering group meets regularly and has appropriate terms of reference it has been unable to achieve a consensus on the way forward. The governors are conscious of the issues that separate the head teachers but they have been unable to resolve the tensions between the two schools. Decisions that affect both schools have sometimes been made in a manner that has been detrimental to the spirit of co-operation and mutual trust envisaged at the outset, and this is directly linked to an earlier failure to agree and establish practice, procedures and lines of accountability.
46. Both schools have placed the education of their respective students uppermost in their discussions and the interests of the students have not been damaged to any degree. However, the lack of strategic vision for the sixth form has impacted adversely on staff and is

- reflected at departmental level. Where departmental management is strongest, teachers from both schools are able to work together co-operatively and share best practice.
47. The sixth form management team made up of the director of sixth form, the heads of year and the sixth form tutors ensure that daily administrative arrangements, systems and procedures work well. Students are known well individually and benefit from good levels of personal support. Sixth form managers are accessible. The calendar of the sixth form activities is satisfactory in character.
 48. Existing strategies for monitoring and evaluating the performance of individual students in the joint sixth form are good. However, there are shortcomings in respect of students taking courses at other schools in the consortium partnership. Overall, the quality of school self-evaluation is good, but the evaluation of outcomes is not yet effective in ensuring the development of the sixth form. In the absence of congruent leadership, the schools lack a clear strategic plan for change and improvement. In terms of the partnership, staff lack clear guidelines for action and there are insufficient calendared opportunities for teachers to meet and for cross-school lesson observation.
 49. Funding is used in a cost-effective way to give students a good curriculum and very good quality of teaching. However, there are anomalies in relation to staffing and locus of employer liability which need to be resolved.
 50. The Joint Sixth Form has maintained the very good quality of teaching and learning and the very good standards of attainment that were reported on previously in the respective inspections of both schools. However, the overall achievement of the boys, relative to previous GCSE attainment, has declined over the past three years, in contrast to that of the girls.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,496,729
Total expenditure	2,450,345
Expenditure per pupil	3,133

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-5,432
Balance carried forward to the next	40,952

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make very good gains in both key stages
- Very good leadership gives impetus to strategies that are raising standards
- Pupils achieve very well in national tests and GCSE examinations because of very good teaching and their own very positive attitudes
- Very good improvement in teaching and learning has taken place since the previous inspection
- Marking across the department does not give all pupils the same degree of help to improve their written work

Commentary

51. Pupils join the school with well above average attainment in English. Pupils learn very well so that high standards of work are consistently maintained. By Year 9 pupils show in their work and in their national test results that they have made very good gains. Results for 2003 were well above the national average and above the national average for pupils at selective schools. School data indicate that most pupils achieve national test results that are better than those predicted from their earlier academic performance.
52. Very good achievement continues in Years 10 and 11. GCSE results for 2003 in English and in English literature were well above average for all schools and above the average achieved nationally by boys' selective schools. The results of most pupils exceeded estimates of their likely grades. By Year 11 pupils produce work in class that is also well above average. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported so that they, too, make very good progress over time. Pupils from all ethnic backgrounds achieve the same range of levels as other pupils. Overall this represents very good achievement for all pupils who build very well on earlier standards.
53. Pupils in all years are very confident speakers and usually attentive listeners. Very good vocabulary and expression are evident in class discussion. Pupils collaborate well in small groups and show that they are resourceful organizers. Levels of skill in reading are also high. Pupils read aloud with good expression so as to convey meaning clearly and effectively. Good research is widely evident in background studies to pupils' reading of Dickens and Shakespeare. The library is not as central or as spacious as in many schools but a substantial minority of pupils uses it very well. In Years 10 and 11 pupils analyse literary texts such as William Golding's 'Lord of the Flies' in admirable detail. They have good understanding of how writers seek to achieve particular effects. Written work is accurate and more varied than usual. Many pupils in all years show that they have an individual voice to express their ideas and feelings, as seen in very good short stories by pupils in Year 9. Frequent opportunities for extended writing enable pupils to develop skills across a wide range of tasks.
54. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers plan lessons carefully to involve all pupils and to ensure that materials are of high quality and suitably challenging. They manage classes very well with good humour but high expectations, so that very good standards of behaviour are always maintained. Delivery of lessons is often dynamic and enthusiastic, which generates high levels of interest that lead to very good learning. Lessons move along at a brisk

pace so that pupils make substantial gains in learning. All teachers put strong emphasis upon developing pupils' skills in language. The best marking is detailed and helpful so that pupils see clear pathways to improving their writing. However, not all marking is as good as this and in some cases exercise books are not sufficiently well overseen to help pupils best develop the process of their writing. Pupils have very good attitudes in lessons and behave very well.

55. Leadership of the department is very good. A shared vision guides the work of the department. Responsibilities are very effectively spread so that individual strengths are fully employed. Organisation is consistently effective. All teachers are involved in joint strategies to raise standards of teaching and learning, which have improved notably in the last two years. Very good overall improvement has taken place since the previous inspection.

Drama (inspected within English)

56. One lesson in drama was sampled. Drama is taught once a fortnight to pupils in Years 7 to 9 as part of their overall English provision and as an optional GCSE subject for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The numbers of pupils choosing to take the subject vary from year to year.
57. Teaching and learning are good overall and very good in Years 10 and 11. By Year 9 pupils achieve expected levels of work. By Year 11 those taking GCSE drama achieve well above average standards of work. They build very well upon their standards at the beginning of Year 10. GCSE examination results for 2003 were very high with nine out of ten pupils gaining either A* or A grades. Results have improved rapidly over the last three years.
58. Outside the classroom pupils have satisfactory opportunities to extend their learning. Recent dramatic productions have included John Steinbeck's 'The Grapes of Wrath' and R. B. Sheridan's 'The School for Scandal'. Currently there is no drama club. Sound leadership and good management contribute to the good standards of drama in the school and the outstanding GCSE results.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

59. Standards of literacy are well above average. Pupils in all years are very confident speakers in a wide range of situations. Reading is very well developed. Pupils read their own books regularly in English lessons. A minority makes good use of the school library for private reading but opportunities for research are currently limited by the small number of computers. Pupils readily meet the demands for reading in all subjects. Opportunities for reading aloud and for research activities are widespread. They occur frequently in English, history, geography, physical education, art and design, design and technology and ICT. Good focus on technical vocabulary is a feature of lessons in mathematics, religious education and music. Good modelling of different types of writing is helping pupils to develop their own written work in English, geography and physical education. In art evaluations of written work are displayed and there is good emphasis on using correct punctuation. Good guidelines for writing essays have an important place in history teaching. Marking is generally effective in raising pupils' awareness of literacy. Very good practice is evident in English and design and technology. The strategy for raising levels of literacy throughout the school has had a beneficial impact across all subjects so that pupils have made good progress.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Provision in Modern Foreign Languages is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A wide curriculum offers experience of four different languages
- Teachers have developed good relationships with their classes and have high expectations to which pupils respond positively
- Effective use of a variety of resources, including ICT, engages pupils' interest

- The wealth of trips and exchanges on offer enriches the linguistic and cultural experience of pupils
- Pupils do not perform as well in modern languages as in their other GCSE subjects
- Work needs to be more closely matched to pupils' ability, so that pupils receive the necessary challenge or support

Commentary

60. Teacher assessments show standards in modern languages at the end of Year 9 are well above the national average. Standards of work seen in French, Spanish and German reflect this, with high attaining pupils able to use a variety of tenses in both their written and spoken language. In 2003, GCSE French and Spanish results, although well above the national average, were nonetheless lower than in similar schools nationwide. Similarly, GCSE German results, whilst above average nationally, compared unfavourably with similar schools and pupils did not perform as well in languages as in their other subjects. The school does, however, have a relatively broad academic profile and the decline in standards can be attributed to problems with the submission of pupils' coursework, along with continuing motivational issues.
61. The standard of work seen during the inspection ranged from some poorly presented and unfinished tasks, to extended pieces of writing which showed an impressive command of tenses and incorporated a wide variety of vocabulary and structures. Pupils who are used to hearing and using the foreign language in the classroom speak fluently and use tenses accurately. Overall, standards of oral and written work are good.
62. Pupils are achieving well in Years 7 to 9, particularly those in the 'Fast-track' group, who make rapid progress. These pupils write accurately and speak confidently. They also show a good understanding of the language when listening or reading. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 make satisfactory progress over the key stage. Pupils with special needs also make satisfactory progress, due to well-targeted support but some who find themselves in groups of more mixed ability do not achieve as well as they might, were materials more closely matched to their needs.
63. Teaching and learning are good overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, high expectations and good relationships with their pupils. This, along with an energetic delivery and a brisk pace, keeps pupils on task. Lesson objectives are routinely shared with pupils, which enables them to understand the direction of their learning. Effective use is made of a variety of resources, including ICT, to engage pupils' interest. The emphasis on active learning and ICT is improving attitudes and motivation. Lessons show a logical progression and practise a balance of skills, although the planning does not always take into account the needs of different groups. The amount of target language used in the classroom varies. In the best lessons, the target language is used throughout, which not only develops pupils' listening skills but also provides a consistent model for pupils to emulate.
64. Assessment procedures are developing well with the introduction of 'National Curriculum Progress Cards', which monitor the performance of pupils in Years 7 to 9, in each of the four skills and sets targets. Pupils' awareness of their National Curriculum level, however, remains limited and more explicit reference to the levels needs to be made in class. Homework is set regularly and consolidates work done in class. However, poor timing in some lessons leads to homework being explained after the bell, which inevitably affects pupils' understanding of the task set. Nevertheless, exercise books are marked thoroughly according to the new departmental assessment policy, which encourages pupils to take more responsibility for their learning.
65. Pupils' language learning makes a very good contribution to the development of their literacy and ICT skills and a further strength of the department is the contribution it makes to pupils' cultural development, through the wealth of foreign trips and exchanges available.

66. The department is well led. Teaching is observed, exercise books are monitored regularly and good practice is shared. Accommodation is old and dingy but colourful murals and imaginative displays enhance the learning environment. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

Areas for development:

- *Improve differentiated planning to meet the needs of different groups*
- *Raise pupil awareness of levels more explicitly*

MATHEMATICS

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE are very high
- The quality of leadership of mathematics is very good, and the match of teachers to the curriculum is excellent
- The quality of teaching is very good which leads to very good learning opportunities
- Occasionally, not enough time is set aside at the end of lessons for high quality plenary sessions
- Teachers form very positive relationships with their pupils and insist on very good behaviour; as a result, pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive

Commentary

67. Results at the end of Year 9 were very high when compared to all schools. In comparison with schools with broadly similar prior attainment, the results were average. Middle attaining pupils performed very well, and higher attaining pupils, who are in the majority at this school, achieved very high levels. The overall performance is in the top five per cent of schools nationally. Considering the attainment levels when pupils arrive at the school, which are well above average, pupils achieve very well. The highest average points score was achieved in 2003, and results over the last few years have increased at a greater rate than the national average.
68. In 2003, GCSE results were very high. Over the last few years, they have been significantly above national averages, and are near to the national average for selective boys' schools when grades A*-C are considered. The percentage of the very highest grades A*/A is nearly four times the national average, and the school achieved twice as many A* grades in 2003 than in the previous year. When compared to all other subjects in the school, boys performed considerably above other subjects.
69. Pupils enter the school with levels of attainment in mathematics that are well above national averages. By Year 9, standards of work seen are very high. The Fast-track group use basic trigonometry very skilfully and learn the sine rule, which in mathematics is normally reserved for Year 11 pupils studying at the higher tier of GCSE. Higher attaining pupils in Year 11 are stretched in their mathematical thinking by very demanding and thought-provoking debate about algebraic proofs. Pupils' achievement is very high because teachers have exceptional expectations of the levels of mathematics at which they can perform. This is an improvement on the last inspection, as standards then were well above average; they are now very high.
70. The overall quality of teaching and learning in mathematics is very good. Over half of the lessons are very good or excellent. Teachers' command of mathematics is excellent, and this allows them to confidently challenge pupils in their learning by introducing very high-level concepts. Planning is very good, and several three-part lessons were observed. However, some teachers do not generally leave enough time for a thorough plenary session, necessary to confirm and extend knowledge and skills gained during the lesson. Teachers expect pupils

to work very hard, and only accept the highest standards from them. Some very demanding work was seen. Classroom management is good. This leads to very mature behaviour and very good achievement in many lessons. Pupils respond very well to challenges from teachers and work very enthusiastically.

71. Assessment of pupils' work is satisfactory, but the quality of marking varies among teachers. Targets are set and discussed with pupils.
72. The leadership and management of the department is very good. Objectives for continual improvement and for maintaining and increasing the very high standards are set. Planning and organisation within the department are very good. Examination results are analysed; areas for development are sought. Monitoring of teaching is undertaken, but needs further development.

Areas for development

- *Extend the monitoring of teaching and learning in order to develop and share best practice*

Mathematics across the curriculum

73. A whole school draft policy on the use of mathematics across the curriculum in Years 7 to 9 has been circulated at staff meetings. Every head of department has identified numeracy opportunities in their curricula. All teachers have seen the draft statement, and are analysing what non-mathematicians can achieve. The ideas in the National Numeracy Strategy are also extended into lessons in mathematics for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' numeracy skills are very high compared to national expectations.
74. In science, graphical skills are very good when pupils plot complicated data with difficult scales. The pupils' very high numeracy skills allow them to access the very highest levels in science. The ICT department considers numeracy satisfactorily, but does not place enough emphasis on the use of numeracy skills. Pupils in art and design use proportion well in figure drawing. In design and technology, accurate measurement and good spatial awareness is seen. Pupils carry out good surveys and convert their results into high quality graphs. Diagrams and line graphs are used to illustrate historical data. There is very good planning in geography, where pupils use numeracy widely and successfully in coursework and fieldwork. Quantitative analysis and evaluation of data, including Spearman's Rank Coefficient, are used extensively. In modern foreign languages, there is counting but no manipulation of currencies in the target language. The quality of numeracy work in physical education is good. GCSE coursework shows very good examples of tabulation of results and graphical analysis on health-related fitness when pupils design their own programmes.

SCIENCE

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Experienced teachers use their very good subject knowledge to plan and deliver effective lessons
- Very good relationships between teachers and pupils lead to a very good working atmosphere
- Marking of pupils' work is very thorough but often does not include advice about how to improve achievement

Commentary

75. Results at the end of Year 9 are very high when compared to all schools. They are above average when compared to schools where the pupils entered Year 7 with similar results. At the end of Year 11 the percentage of pupils gaining A* to C grades in the single sciences is

above the average for boys' selective schools and in double science, taken by the majority of pupils, it is well above. The number of A* and A grades that the boys achieve in chemistry and biology are higher than in similar schools.

76. Boys enter the school with well above average attainment in science. In Years 7 to 9 they make progress at a rate that is above average. In Years 10 and 11 they continue to make progress that is broadly in line with that of pupils in boys' selective schools.
77. The quality of teaching is predominantly good and very good. Most teachers use very skilful questioning to draw out good responses from pupils. They maintain pace in lessons by incorporating a variety of activities, including a good range of practical work. Teachers have very high expectations and pupils respond well and genuinely enjoy their lessons. Clear objectives are given at the beginning of lessons and good summaries at the end. Teachers use the assessment of pupils' work to identify those who are not making as much progress against their predicted level as they should be. Targets for these pupils are then set after discussion with them. From Year 9 onwards all pupils have three different specialist science teachers. This does not lead to any conflict because communication between all teachers is excellent.
78. Leadership is very good. The head of department leads by example and has a clear vision for the subject. Management is good. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and tasks such as data analysis are shared by all teachers. Some policies are still being developed and there is a strong focus on raising standards. All pupils have access to the range of subjects at GCSE, both single sciences and double science. Since the last inspection opportunities to use computers as tools in experiments have greatly increased and new initiatives such as the national Key Stage 3 science strategy and Cognitive Acceleration through Science Education have been introduced. These should lead to improvement in GCSE results as pupils who have experienced them work their way through the school. Accommodation and resources are very good. The science resource area with its wide range of textbooks and computers is appreciated by all pupils. Teachers are supported by hard-working, dedicated technicians.

Areas for development:

- *Consider extending provision for more able pupils*

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The provision for ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' subject knowledge and their understanding of the examination requirements at GCSE is good
- Very good achievement in Years 10 and 11
- Assessment of ICT in subjects across the curriculum is not adequately used to inform the reporting of attainment at the end of Year 9
- Pupils who do not follow the GCSE course in Year 10 and 11 are not receiving their entitlement to development in all aspects of ICT

Commentary

79. Standards reported in teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 are above the national average, but below the average for similar schools. In recent years the attainment reported had been falling steadily, but this trend has been halted and reversed in 2003. Pupil attainment when using ICT in subjects across the curriculum is not assessed. This leads to the possibility that their attainment is higher than is reported. Based on the standards reported by teacher assessment, the achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is good.

80. Results at GCSE are well above national averages. Standards have risen steadily in recent years in terms of the percentage of pupils achieving success at grades A*-A grades and A*-C grades. Standards in 2003 were just above the average for similar schools. This represents very good achievement in maintaining and extending high standards.
81. Overall, the quality of teaching observed in ICT lessons was very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. Careful selection of tasks and examples used to illustrate teaching helps enthuse the pupils. Consequently they enjoy the work, see the relevance of the tasks and work productively. Their learning is very effective. Teaching observed in Years 10 and 11 was also consistently very good. Teachers have very good understanding of the requirements of the GCSE and its assessment. They explain this well to their pupils. In Years 7 to 9 teachers' understanding and use of level descriptors as learning and assessment objectives are less well developed. The marking of the pupils' work is very thorough, but relates more to completion of tasks rather than the level at which they are working.
82. The curriculum offered in the discrete subject covers the requirements of the National Curriculum and is reinforced and supported by the use of ICT in subjects across the curriculum. In Years 10 and 11, however, the pupils who do not choose to follow the course leading to GCSE ICT cannot be guaranteed full access to their entitlement. A course followed in afternoon registrations give them 15 minutes per fortnight. In the lesson observed, pupils used their time very effectively and learning was very good. This course does not cover the use of ICT to share and exchange information. Although this course is supported by the use of ICT in subjects, individuals' use of ICT is not tracked and therefore there is no guarantee that all individuals receive their entitlement.
83. The subject is well led. A clear vision of how to improve and maintain standards is shared well with the other teachers and an effective team has been developed. The department is well managed. Peer monitoring of teaching is used well to spread good ideas and practices. Self-evaluation and the monitoring of performance contribute to raising standards.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

84. ICT is used in most subjects in the curriculum except religious education. In geography the use is limited to research using the Internet. The co-ordination of the use of ICT in subjects across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. In Years 7 to 9 the lack of assessment of pupils' ICT capability when using it within subjects leads to the potential recording and reporting of their attainment at lower levels than are actually achieved.

Areas for development:

- *develop the use of National Curriculum level descriptors as learning and assessment objectives in Year 7 to 9*
- *ensure the assessment of ICT used in subjects across the curriculum to inform the reporting of attainment at the end of Year 9*
- *ensure the pupils who do not follow the GCSE course in Year 10 and 11 are all receiving their entitlement to development in all aspects of ICT*

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and show evidence of value added to prior attainment
- Teaching is very good and as a result pupils make very good progress

- Regular assessment is used effectively to track progress and help pupils improve their work.
- Good leadership that has encouraged high standards of attainment.
- Field work in schemes of work is limited
- The use of ICT as a teaching and learning tool needs development
- The learning environment is poor

Commentary

85. Overall standards in geography are well above national average at the end of Year 9 and well above average at the end of Year 11. This represents good achievement in relation to pupils' prior attainment. The department has introduced some successful strategies to raise the attainment of boys at GCSE to well above the national average in 2003. Results in previous years have been consistently very good with average percentages in line with similar schools. The percentage of pupils gaining the higher grades A*-B was well below the average in boys' selective schools and the department acknowledges that this is an area for development.
86. In Years 7-9 standards of work are well above average. Pupils are achieving well and make very good progress in lessons. Revised schemes of work and an emphasis on literacy skills have helped to raise standards. Teachers are emphasising reading and using the correct geographical terms and this is having a positive effect on achievement and literacy skills. ICT is not, as yet, integrated into work programmes and the department needs to develop further its use as a teaching and learning tool. Extension work through homework allows many pupils to achieve very high levels of understanding. A small number of pupils with special educational needs are well supported and integrated into lessons.
87. In Years 10 and 11, standards are well above average and achievement is good in relation to prior attainment. A new GCSE course has enabled pupils to achieve higher levels with coursework, using a wide range of skills. Year 11 projects provided opportunities for detailed research on the changing function and sphere of influence of a local shopping centre. The pupils demonstrated very good skills in collecting data, interpreting the information, using maps and diagrams and evaluating the research. Detailed notebooks provide a very good base for learning and pupil progress is supported by revision sheets and end of module assessments.
88. Teaching is very good in all years with many examples of very good practice and resultant learning. The depth of teachers' knowledge has a very positive impact on learning. Questioning by both teachers and pupils is a regular feature of lessons and this open approach considerably develops the pupils' thinking and learning. Very good teaching challenges and engages the pupils in the lessons and encourages pupils to think and work independently. Pupils are motivated by the teaching, show interest in the work and are able to sustain concentration. Lessons are well prepared with clear objectives and as a result pupils make very good progress. Learning is very good when the teacher ensures understanding of topics and set structured attainable tasks. Supportive marking with guidelines of how to improve have assisted pupil progress. Firm classroom management creates a good working environment for learning and ensures a swift pace to most lessons. Pupils behave well allowing teachers to give detailed attention to individuals.
89. The department is well led. Clear direction and support is provided to a strong team of teachers. Imaginative schemes of work, effective assessment methods and greater understanding of learning strategies have all helped to raise standards. There is a need to delegate more formally responsibilities within the department. The learning environment could also be improved through greater expenditure on the fabric and resources in the teaching rooms. There is considerable scope for the development of further field work opportunities in Year 7-10. Good display work in the department has a very positive effect on pupil learning. The department has addressed all of the issues in the previous report and the subject is well placed to build on its success and make further progress in the future.

Areas for development:

- *Focus on strategies to increase the number of pupils achieving the higher levels at GCSE*
- *Increase the amount of field work to support learning*
- *Develop further the use of ICT as a tool for teaching and learning*

History

Overall, provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above the national average and achievement is good
- Good teaching
- Good leadership and management
- Good procedures for assessment
- Insufficient improvement in the number of A*-C grades
- The programme for curricular enrichment is very limited

Commentary

90. In 2003, standards at the end of Year 9, based on assessments carried out by teachers, were well above the national average for both the percentage of pupils attaining at the expected level and also those attaining at the higher levels. There has been an overall significant improvement in standards over the past five years, especially in the percentage of pupils who attain at the level above the expected level. A full range of inspection evidence also indicates that attainment is well above what is seen nationally. This represents good progress since the previous inspection, when standards were judged to be above average.
91. Pupils enter the school with very varied experience of the study of history and the work which they produce during the early part of Year 7 indicates that standards are generally a little above average. Pupils achieve well to reach levels which are well above the national average by the end of Year 9. Pupils with special educational needs also make good progress.
92. Attainment in the GCSE examination in 2003 was well above the national average for the percentage of pupils who attain grades A*-C and the percentage of pupils who gained a grade A*-B was in line with the national average for selective boys' schools. However, the percentage who attained levels A*-C was smaller than that for selective boys' schools nationally. There has been a steady increase over the past three years in the percentage of pupils who attain grades A*-B but no increase in the A*-C grades. A full range of evidence seen during the course of the inspection indicates that in general standards at the end of Year 11 are well above what is seen nationally. This indicates generally good progress since the previous inspection, when standards were above average, although there has been insufficient improvement in the percentage of pupils attaining A*-C.
93. Pupils start the GCSE course in Year 10 with prior attainment which is well above average and by the end of Year 11 they remain well above average. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well to maintain well above average standards in response to the demands of the GCSE course, although the small number of who attain lower than a grade C do not make enough progress
94. The quality of teaching is consistently good. Teachers plan their lessons well with clear objectives. They plan a wide range of activities to maintain pupils' interest and concentration and pupils respond well by invariably working hard and behaving sensibly. Teachers make effective use of work in small groups and pupils progress well by hearing their peers feedback their ideas to the whole class. Good use of assessment is made to track pupils' progress and keep them well informed about this. Marking is regular and is generally helpful in keeping

pupils informed about what they need to do in order to improve, although there are some exceptions to this. There is very strong emphasis on the need for pupils to understand examination criteria in order to plan answers which will meet these. The explicit emphasis on the development of a wide vocabulary specific to the subject is very effective. There is some inconsistency in the way in which teachers of classes in Years 7-9 record pupils' progress and in the regularity with which they expect pupils to record their own reflections on this. Discussion is used very effectively to promote progress, but because of pupils' high standards of debate, teachers sometimes allow this to continue for too long and do not leave sufficient time to summarise and draw conclusions at the end of lessons.

95. Leadership and management are good and there has been good progress since the previous inspection. There are clear priorities for development and for continuing to raise standards. There is good additional support for pupils identified as being likely to attain lower than a C grade at GCSE, but efforts to ensure that all these pupils avail themselves of this support are not sufficiently rigorous. Monitoring and support of teachers is used effectively. There are realistic and clear routes for delegation of responsibilities. Very good procedures exist for the assessment of pupils' work, which actively involve the pupils themselves. Good schemes of work clearly identify opportunities for the development of literacy and numeracy, but not for ICT. This is unsatisfactory and has not improved since the previous inspection. The procedures for assessment of standards and progress are good, but the inconsistency with which these are applied has not been rigorously addressed. There are insufficient opportunities for the enrichment of the curriculum through visits to places of interest or by inviting visitors to the school.

Areas for development:

- *ensure that there are rigorous procedures for ensuring that all pupils who would benefit take advantage of the additional support which is offered to them*
- *develop a coherent and appropriate programme of curriculum enrichment*

Religious education

The provision for religious education is **unsatisfactory** because the school does not adequately cover the requirements of the local agreed syllabus in Years 10 and 11.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Insufficient time allocation in Years 10 and 11 does not give pupils their full entitlement to religious education
- Pupils are sensitive to the values and faiths of people from other religions and able to discuss important issues in a mature and thoughtful manner
- Pupils in year 7–9 have a sound foundation knowledge of all the major religions
- Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and satisfactorily use a wide range of teaching strategies to engage pupils in lively discussions
- Assessment procedures need developing
- The choice of examination syllabus and impact of time restrictions in Years 10 and 11 mean that pupils' knowledge of the full cultural diversity of our society is limited

Commentary

96. By the end of Year 9, standards of attainment are above those set out in the local agreed syllabus. Pupils have a good understanding of the major beliefs and practices of the main religions that are found in our society. They can confidently express their opinions in an open manner and have a sensitive awareness of the impact that religion has upon people's lives.

97. Pupils' achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good. Pupils of all ability make good progress. In particular pupils with SEN make very good progress. Pupils in the examination groups make satisfactory progress. Limited time means that the achievement of all pupils in the non-examination groups is unsatisfactory.
98. In 2002-3 small groups were entered for the full GCSE. Results were above the national average but analysis indicates that grades achieved were below those predicted. Standards in the current Year 10 suggest a similar picture. Whilst having a strong understanding of the relationship between religion and ethics, pupils' knowledge is mainly of Christian beliefs. Year 10 pupils following the examination course have produced some excellent extended essays based upon a good understanding of the Gospel of St Mark.
99. A shortage of time is reflected in the standard of achievement of Year 10 and 11 pupils who do not follow the examination course. They are able to confidently express themselves on a variety of social and moral issues but their knowledge of specifically religious beliefs and practices is limited. The foundation that has been laid in Years 7 to 9 is not built upon and limited time means that the overall achievement of these pupils is unsatisfactory.
100. The quality of teaching and learning varies considerably but, overall, is satisfactory. In good lessons, experienced teachers use their knowledge of the subject well, incorporating a variety of teaching methods to interest and involve students. Resources are used well, although a large number of old and less inviting worksheets and OHP slides is often to be seen. In these lessons pupils are well behaved and fully committed to their work. Occasionally classroom relationships are not effectively managed, with the result that behaviour breaks down and the lesson deteriorates. In these lessons the quality of learning is unsatisfactory.
101. Assessment procedures have yet to be fully developed and, in consequence, pupils are not always aware of what they need to do to improve their level of knowledge. Both teachers and pupils under-use ICT.
102. The subject leadership is satisfactory. The subject leader has a clear vision for the subject and is well organised. Some important developments such as assessment have yet to be fully addressed. A traditional examination syllabus does not fully complement the multicultural approach adopted in earlier years.
103. In Years 7 to 9, religious education makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Lack of time in Years 10 and 11 means that opportunities for development of the spiritual and cultural dimensions are limited, particularly in relation to the exploration of beliefs and practices of other religions. This results in pupils' understanding of the cultural diversity of our society being limited. Progress on this issue since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory.

Areas for development:

- *Ensure adequate time to secure pupils' full entitlement to religious education*
- *Consider a GCSE syllabus that is linked more closely to the work done in years 7–9*
- *Make more effective use of ICT in both teaching and departmental organisation*

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in all the material areas of the subject are significantly above average

- Teaching generates high standards, good achievement and very positive attitudes towards learning
- Assessment practice clearly informs all pupils of how well they are doing
- The Key Stage 3 curriculum could be improved by greater opportunities for pupils to work in compliant materials, e.g. textiles, and to use computers

Commentary

104. At the end of Year 9, teachers' assessment shows pupils to be attaining well above the average compared with all schools and in line with the average for boys' selective schools. This is confirmed by inspection evidence. Pupils are given good opportunities of working in a broad range of materials, including electronics. Most pupils enter school with variable skills, knowledge and understanding in the subject and make good progress, achieving well by the end of Year 9. This is because good teaching develops their understanding of the principles and processes of designing well. The planning of lessons is good, with clear progression in the sequence of the work. Lessons are well organised, have clear objectives and there is a high expectation of quality outcomes from all pupils. Pupils are well informed about their National Curriculum levels because the assessment practice is very thorough. The assessment practice involves the pupils and effectively establishes targets for self improvement. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs achieve as well as do others.
105. GCSE results are significantly above the average when compared with all schools and above the average when compared with boys' selective schools. Current standards in Year 11 reflect these results and represents good achievement overall. Literacy and presentation skills are exceptionally good in the work of the higher attaining pupils. All pupils research their work well and there is generally a good balance between computer-generated graphics and free-hand work. Making skills are good and outcomes are true to the initial design specification. Because of predominantly good and very good teaching, pupils show a very positive attitude towards learning and demonstrate good independent learning skills. They portray a marked sense of pride in their work. They are very articulate and can explain their design ideas lucidly showing a very good understanding of the design process and principles. Teachers mark work regularly and provide detailed, clear, and constructive comments that inform pupils of what they need to do to improve. Pupils respond very well to the challenges set them and speak highly of the support and guidance provided by their teachers.
106. Leadership and management are very good and have enabled good improvement since the previous inspection. A clear vision for the direction of the subject is shared with all teaching staff. Good assessment practice is consistently applied across all material areas. The management of the subject is highly effective in ensuring that the policies and practice is implemented with very good support for new teachers and supply teachers covering absences. This ensures that the day-to-day delivery of the subject is consistent and very effective. Although there has been a significant improvement in the range of materials that pupils experience extended work in compliant materials remains limited as reported in the previous inspection. The technical support provided is very effective in supporting the learning but is insufficient to meet the needs of all material areas. The use of the computer has improved in general but a lack of resources in the area limits further developments, both in the use of computers generally in Years 7 to 9, and particularly to program a computer to manufacture a product in all years.

Areas for development:

- *Adopt more rigorous strategies to improve pupils' presentation skills especially in relation to producing more accurate and detailed 3-dimensional sketches*
- *More exemplars of high standards of work produced by pupils in the past could be used to guide and support pupils when tackling new projects*

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Provision for art and design is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are well above national averages and above average for similar schools.
- Very good teaching ensures that all students achieve well.
- Practical and academic skills are well developed.
- ICT is well used to support progress at both key stages.
- A carefully structured scheme of work is well matched to student needs.

Commentary

107. Although a significant minority of students join Year 7 with limited practical skills, particularly in observational drawing and the use of paint, very good teaching and carefully constructed units of work ensure that by Year 9 students are performing well above national averages. All students have developed good skills in a variety of two and three-dimensional work, including drawing, painting, print-making, collages and papier-mâché modelling. Pupils also have a comprehensive understanding and appreciation of artistic concepts such as line, tone, texture and colour, and use this knowledge in their work. The three-dimensional activities, explored through the historical portraits in Year 8, and the 'fantastic shoes' unit in Year 9, show a high degree of finish. Students are skilled in research and in developing their ideas. Many show initiative and independent thinking through their homework assignments. They have a good knowledge of a range of artists, although they remain less certain about the significance of art in culture.
108. Standards in Year 11 are well above national averages and above average when compared with other selective boys' schools. Students build upon their practical and academic skills, through set units that encourage experimentation and research. Many students make good use of photography and ICT in developing their work, and a significant number of students already display a very personal and creative style in their completed coursework.
109. Teaching and learning in art are consistently very good. Teachers successfully integrate academic and practical understanding through an innovative scheme of work that is well matched to pupil needs. For example, weaknesses in practical skills are quickly tackled through carefully selected activities linked to appropriate artists. Units of work are well structured but remain sufficiently flexible to allow for creative outcomes. Most students like art and teachers ensure that they are quickly engaged in their lessons from the outset. Teachers successfully create an atmosphere of industry and enjoyment, where students work continuously, often in self-induced silence, proud of what they are achieving. Lessons frequently conclude with targeted questioning, when teachers establish that students have fully grasped the importance of what has been achieved. A good programme of assessment, which includes peer assessment and self-evaluations, and is supported by helpful marking, ensures that students know how well they are doing and how to improve.
110. The subject is well led. The structured academic and practical approach to art is mirrored in the high quality displays both inside the art rooms and around the school. The strong team of gifted teachers give freely of their time and classrooms are regularly open for students wishing to use them. There has been good progress since the last report. Some of the issues raised at that time have been addressed and remedied.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising in all years
- Numbers opting for music at GCSE are double the national average group size
- Teaching, learning and achievement are good in Years 7-11
- The department has moved into new accommodation and resources have been improved
- More resources for music technology are needed in Years 7-9 to support composing

Commentary

111. Pupils' musical experience prior to Year 7 is very varied but achievement for all pupils is good throughout Years 7-9. At the end of Year 9, standards are above national levels. More pupils attain the expected level than nationally and a significant minority attain above the level. Pupils have good musical understanding and knowledge and they use musical terminology appropriately. Listening skills are good. Standards in performing vary from in line with national levels to excellent. Most pupils can maintain their individual parts accurately with a mostly steady pulse. In the best work they also add chords and perform the extended sections. In composition, pupils need more access to music technology to create, manipulate and realise their ideas. Standards are less good in composing than in performing and listening.
112. GCSE results at the end of Year 11 in 2003 rose to above national average standards and broadly in line with those for selective boys' schools. Numbers of pupils choosing music has recently increased and, currently, numbers are double the national average group size in both Years 10 and 11. Work sampled in the inspection was limited but suggests that standards have been maintained in these large groups despite some lack of coursework last year. Listening skills are good and pupils play various instruments in a variety of styles. Limited resources for music technology restrict the development of compositions and pupils' standards in this part of the course are affected. Achievement is good overall.
113. Teaching is good overall and some very good and excellent lessons were observed during the inspection. Teachers plan their lessons very well and varied tasks sustain pupils' interest and increase overall understanding of the subject. Their subject skills are very good and they explain tasks clearly to pupils with good accompanying worksheets and musical examples. In the best lessons, questioning is particularly well used to consolidate and extend knowledge and pupils respond enthusiastically. Teachers have a very good understanding of their pupils' needs and abilities and extension tasks are well prepared. Timed tasks ensure a very good pace of learning and tasks are challenging for all with opportunities to develop skills in independent learning. Good support from teachers in the practical work ensures that all make equally good progress. Teachers work hard and give their time freely to support pupils with their individual coursework. This has been particularly important this year as not all coursework was completed last year. Numbers learning to play instruments are higher than the national average and teaching is good in these lessons.
114. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The subject leader has a good vision for the future development of the department and the management skills to achieve it. However, his workload is very substantial as he has responsibility across two schools. Rationalisation of this situation by the senior management teams is needed and would be of advantage to pupils and staff of both schools.
115. A good scheme of assessment common to both schools has been successfully pioneered in Year 7 and more of these common strategies should be explored. The department recognises the need to build an archive of recordings alongside this new scheme to aid future planning.

116. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The department has moved into new, purpose-built accommodation shared with Stroud High School. The new block is isolated from both main school buildings and networking is needed to ease communications. Resources have also improved. However, more resources are needed to allow pupils to develop skills in music technology and some more instruments are needed to support the study of world music.

Areas for improvement:

- *Rationalise the schemes of work to maximise the benefits of a shared resource*

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Overall provision for physical education is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in GCSE are very high compared to the national average and above the average for selective boys' schools
- Teachers have very good knowledge and plan lessons well with clear objectives and progressions to ensure that pupils achieve very well
- Leadership and management are very good and there is a clear vision for future development
- Indoor accommodation and resources for gymnastics are very poor at the present time, but a new sports hall is almost complete

Commentary

117. Standards in Years 7–9 are above average, representing very good achievement, as pupils enter the school with limited experience and, thus, below average attainment in some activities. Pupils' knowledge is well above average, especially in Year 9 health-related fitness, where they have very good knowledge of the components of fitness and can apply their knowledge to different sports. However, in practical activities pupils' good intentions are not always matched by the quality of performance, especially in lower attaining games groups.
118. Results in the 2003 GCSE examination were very high when compared to schools nationally, and above average for selective boys' schools. Standards in GCSE lessons are well above average in practical activities and pupils' knowledge is excellent. Consequently, they achieve extremely well in theory lessons. For example, Year 11 pupils demonstrate very good knowledge of skill acquisition and how types of feedback affect performance. The quality of their independently produced work on training programmes is very good. Literacy and numeracy skills are very good and pupils use information and communication technology very well. In core activities in Years 10 and 11, pupils achieve standards that are well above average.
119. The quality of teaching and learning is very good, overall. Teachers have very good knowledge which enables pupils to learn and achieve very well and link theory to practice. Tasks are very well planned with clear objectives and progression, which enable pupils to acquire new skills and apply them in suitable games. Relationships are very good and ensure that pupils are very well integrated, motivated and stay on task. Expectations are high and teachers ask challenging questions to consolidate prior learning and enable pupils to gain further understanding. However, in a minority of lessons, pupils could be given more challenge to analyse their own performance and that of others.
120. Leadership is very good and the department is very well managed. The high quality of provision has been acknowledged nationally as the school has received the Sportsmark award. The work of the department is reviewed annually. Responsibilities are well delegated so that all members of the department contribute to development. Teachers are all very committed to providing a very good range of extra-curricular sporting activities. As a result, teams and individuals gain success in local, regional and national competitions. Procedures to monitor pupils' progress are good and improving.

121. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, especially in terms of standards and curricular development, despite the indoor accommodation and resources for gymnastics still being of poor quality. However, the new sports hall is almost complete and this will enable the department to make further improvement.

Areas for development:

- *Provide opportunities for pupils to analyse their own performance and that of others*

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Overall provision for **personal, social and health education (PSHE)** is good in the main school and the sixth form. There is provision for education on sex, relationships and drug abuse. An adequate allocation of time is provided for PSHE and it is used efficiently to provide a well-structured programme. There is a clear overview of topics to be covered by each year group and heads of year produce lessons plans and resources, so that form tutors are well supported in ensuring consistency of coverage of the planned curriculum. All teaching of PSHE seen during the inspection was at least satisfactory and some was good. Topics which are covered on several occasions during each pupils' time in the school, for example sex education, are well planned to match pupils' increasing maturity and good use is made of a planned programme of outside speakers to both add a new perspective and to offer additional informed input in areas where form tutors might be reasonably seen to have insufficient expertise. "The Event" is one of the elements of the PSHE programme in Years 7-9, directed towards developing in younger pupils an understanding of the way in which each individual learns best and thus to give each pupil a sense of "ownership" of their own learning. This has a clear impact on many pupils, who talk confidently and with interest about the best way for them to learn.

Citizenship

Overall, the quality of provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are encouraged to discuss citizenship issues and take part in school and community based activities
- Pupils listen to other people's experience and are able to explain views that are not their own
- There is a need to develop more coherent programmes of citizenship across the school
- The provision in Years 7-9 has not been formally agreed by the subject departments
- The assessment and recording system in Years 7-9 is not consistently used by the teachers
- Arrangements for reporting to parents at the end of Key Stage 3 are insufficiently developed

Commentary

122. Standards are good at the end of Year 9. Pupils have a sound knowledge and understanding of many aspects of society. A number of departments include citizenship topics within their schemes of work. For example, in Year 7 history, pupils understood the basic rights and responsibilities of individuals after a discussion on the Magna Carta. Year 8 PSHE pupils have a good understanding of fair trade following a talk from the local association representative that led to planned activities and discussion on the topic. In Year 9 religious studies, pupils have a good appreciation of the universal declaration of human rights with particular reference to the examples of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King. Pupils were also able to reflect on the different faiths and cultures within a multi-cultural society after a module of lessons on different faiths. All the work undertaken in the various subject areas has provided opportunities for pupils to think, write and discuss about citizenship issues. Pupils make good progress in citizenship because the school encourages all pupils to discuss citizenship issues and take part in school and community based activities.

123. By the end of Year 11, pupils' knowledge and understanding is above average. All pupils follow the examination course in Citizenship Studies that supports understanding of becoming an informed citizen through a systematic analysis of contemporary society. . Pupils enjoyed the frequent opportunities to apply their skills of enquiry and communication when justifying and expressing their opinion. It is an impressive feature of the school that pupils are encouraged to discuss and express views in citizenship and other subject lessons as long as they listen to other viewpoints. Many pupils in Year 11 write expressively and powerfully on subjects such as human rights and immigration, showing a very good range of vocabulary.
124. Pupils in all years take part in the year and school councils that are increasingly involving them in the school. Pupils are proud of the fact that they contributed to the recent School Charter and also had an influence of increased benching in the school grounds. Many pupils undertake community activities as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Awards. Achievements Awards have also been introduced that include achievements in a variety of school activities including community service. Controversial issues are dealt with sensitively in all subject areas. Issues related to politics, religion and gender are mostly handled well and citizenship contributes significantly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
125. Teaching is good overall and some very good teaching was observed. Good subject knowledge enables pupils to increase their understanding of the topics and issues. Teachers use appropriate methods which engage and challenge pupils. They are interested in the work and particularly enjoy the opportunities for discussion. The management of pupils is good and they work productively and at a good pace.
126. Lesson planning in Years 7-9 does not always identify citizenship content and objectives in relation to the National Curriculum, and the provision has not been formally agreed by the subject departments. There is now a need to develop more coherent programmes of citizenship across the school.
127. The assessment and recording of pupils' achievements in citizenship is variable across the school. The system is satisfactory in Key Stage 4 but it is not consistently used by the teachers in Key Stage 3. A pupil folder for recording evidence of citizenship activities in Years 8 and 9 is not kept up to date by all the form tutors or pupils and the requirement to report to parents at the end of the key stage is unlikely to be met.
128. The co-ordinator for citizenship has led the introduction of citizenship well in Years 10 and 11. An audit has been undertaken at Key Stage 3 through the departmental reviews, but there has been no formal commitment from the departments regarding their expected contribution to the citizenship curriculum. There is a need for senior managers to support a more coherent programme of citizenship across the school.

Areas for development:

- *Monitor the cross-curricular coverage of the National Curriculum strands of citizenship*
- *Monitor the implementation of the assessment policy in Key Stage 3 citizenship to secure consistency and secure the basis for reporting to parents*

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE JOINT SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in **2003**. Some performance information is not available because the small numbers of students taking the course do not permit valid statistical comparisons.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

This table reflects the results of those pupils who did not carry forward their AS points into Y13. The high retention rate from Y12 to Y13 in the joint sixth form is reflected in the national comparisons.

Subject		Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
			School	England	School	England	School	England
Art	Males	5	100	73.8	0.0	16.7	34.0	25.6
	Females	4	75	83.8	25	27.8	27.5	32.5
Accounting	Males	N/A		N/A		N/A		N/A
	Females							
Business studies	Males	5	80.0	75.6	40.0	15.4	40.0	25.5
	Females	3	100	77.5	0.0	17.6	26.7	27.0
Biology	Males	5		62.9		10.9		19.7
	Females	13	92.3	67.0	23.1	11.3	35.4	21.3
Chemistry	Males	5	100	70.5	20.0	12.4	34.0	22.9
	Females	11	100	75.3	18.2	15.7	33.6	25.4
Classical Studies	Males	2	100	85.3	0.0	28.4	20.0	32.8
	Females	8	87.5	89.0	0.0	39.0	23.8	37.0
Communication Studies	Males							
	Females	3	100	88.0	0.0	27.4	30.0	33.8
Computing	Males	N/A		N/A		N/A		N/A
	Females							
Drama	Males	1	100	82.6	100	14.3	50.0	27.5
	Females	3	100	88.5	0.0	22.3	30.0	32.2
Economics	Males	4	50.0	71.8	50.0	18.1	27.5	25.2
	Females	N/A						
English literature	Males	5	100	83.8	60.0	16.3	42.0	28.6
	Females	14	100	86.9	21.4	20.3	38.6	30.9
French	Males	6	83.3	79.7	0.0	21.0	30.0	28.6
	Females	7	57.1	77.6	14.3	17.9	25.7	27.1
Further mathematics	Males	N/A		N/A		N/A		N/A
	Females							
Design & Technology	Males	2	100	70.7	50.0	11.8	45.0	22.8
	Females	10	90.0	81.2	60.0	20.2	44.0	29.1
General studies	Males	N/A		73.9		17.8		25.7
	Females							
Geography	Males	3	66.7	72.5	33.3	16.4	33.3	24.8
	Females	3	100	76.5	66.7	24.0	53.3	28.6
German	Males		100	79.0	50.0	18.8	35.0	28.3
	Females	NA						
History	Males	9	88.9	79.3	11.1	16.5	27.8	27.2
	Females	17	76.5	81.8	35.3	21.8	32.4	29.7
Information Technology	Males	19	84.2	65.8	36.8	10.2	30.5	20.8
	Females	6	100	69.8	16.7	12.5	30.0	22.8
Law	Males	N/A		N/A		N/A		N/A
	Females							
Mathematics	Males	15	66.7	58.7	20.0	15.8	26.7	20.7
	Females	17	70.6	67.0	17.6	19.1	24.1	24.4
Music	Males	2	50.0	83.5	0.0	18.8	10.0	28.9
	Females	1	100	89.7	100	24.2	50.0	32.7

Other Social Studies	<i>Males</i>	20	45.0	65.7	20.0	12.4	19.0	21.6
	<i>Females</i>	22	81.8	72.3	27.3	19.4	32.3	25.8
Psychology	<i>Males</i>	N/A		N/A		N/A		N/A
	<i>Females</i>							
Physics	<i>Males</i>	6	50.0	64.8	16.7	11.6	15.0	20.5
	<i>Females</i>	3	100	79.4	66.7	22.6	50	29.1
Politics and government	<i>Males</i>	20	95.0	N/A	50.0	N/A	41.5	N/A
	<i>Females</i>	40	97.5		70.0		49.3	
Religious Studies	<i>Males</i>	7	57.1	76.4	14.3	18.2	21.4	27.1
	<i>Females</i>	3	100	81.9	33.3	24.6	43.3	31.0
Sociology	<i>Males</i>	1	100	68.4	0.0	13.7	20.0	23.1
	<i>Females</i>	3	100	73.3	33.3	20.5	33.3	26.4
Spanish	<i>Males</i>	2	50.0	78.5	0.0	17.7	15.0	27.5
	<i>Females</i>	12	75	78.5	16.7	17.7	27.5	27.2
Sports/PE Studies	<i>Males</i>	2	100	70.9	50.0	7.9	40.0	21.2
	<i>Females</i>	1	100	78.5	0.0	19.5	30.0	27.5
Theatre studies	<i>Males</i>	N/A		N/A		N/A		N/A
	<i>Females</i>							

Level 3 GCE A level courses

Subject		Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
			School	England	School	England	School	England
Accounting	<i>Males</i>	N/A		N/A		N/A		N/A
	<i>Females</i>							
Art	<i>Males</i>	7	100	97.7	57.1	41.5	91.4	87.5
	<i>Females</i>	12	100	98.9	50	54.1	91.7	90.0
Business studies	<i>Males</i>	6	100	98.7	50.0	34.9	93.3	79.1
	<i>Females</i>	9	100	98.8	66.7	39.7	93.3	80.7
Biology	<i>Males</i>	14	100	95.6	42.9	34.6	85.7	75.2
	<i>Females</i>	27	100	96.8	63	42.1	93.3	80.7
Chemistry	<i>Males</i>	16	100	97.0	56.3	45.4	93.8	82.3
	<i>Females</i>	27	100	98.1	63	52.3	94.1	87.3
Computing	<i>Males</i>	N/A		N/A		N/A		N/A
	<i>Females</i>							
Classical Studies	<i>Males</i>	5	60.0	99.0	20.0	50.3	48.0	87.3
	<i>Females</i>	6	100	99.8	16.7	59.2	66.7	93.0
Communication Studies	<i>Males</i>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
	<i>Females</i>	5	100	99.6	80	41.4	100	84.1
Design & technology	<i>Males</i>	5	100	97.1	80.0	29.5	104.0	74.1
	<i>Females</i>	9	100	98.8	88.9	42.7	106.7	83.3
Drama	<i>Males</i>	4	100	99.0	25.0	30.9	70.0	78.8
	<i>Females</i>	11	100	99.7	45.5	43.7	89.1	85.4
Economics	<i>Males</i>	4	100	98.9	25.0	50.7	80.0	87.4
	<i>Females</i>	2	100	99.2	100	55.4	120	90.7
English literature	<i>Males</i>	21	100	99.2	76.2	46.1	105.7	86.2
	<i>Females</i>	53	100	99.6	83	46.7	105.7	86.7
French	<i>Males</i>	2	100	98.7	50.0	52.7	80.0	88.2
	<i>Females</i>	3	100	98.8	66.7	51.0	86.7	87.3
Geography	<i>Males</i>	10	100	98.5	50.0	39.5	92.0	80.9
	<i>Females</i>	10	100	98.9	70	50.3	100	87.7
German	<i>Males</i>	2	100	98.4	0.0	47.5	80.0	84.6
	<i>Females</i>							
History	<i>Males</i>	18	100	98.9	72.2	40.8	98.9	82.8
	<i>Females</i>	26	100	99.0	65.4	48.0	96.9	86.2
Information and communication technology	<i>Males</i>	13	100	95.4	38.5	24.0	75.4	69.0
	<i>Females</i>	5	100	96.3	40	26.2	72	71.0
Mathematics	<i>Males</i>	34	100	96.1	58.8	53.3	95.3	87.2
	<i>Females</i>	17	100	97.6	52.9	59.5	92.9	91.7

Music	Males	2	100	98.4	50.0	37.8	100	79.7
	Females	7	100	99.2	57.1	40	88.6	82.3
Music technology	Males	N/A		N/A		N/A		N/A
	Females							
Other Social Studies	Males	17	100	96.1	52.9	36.6	85.9	77.1
	Females	51	98	98	70.6	45.5	95.7	84
Physics	Males	16	87.5	96.4	37.5	42.9	76.3	80.6
	Females	6	100	97.9	33.3	50.5	80	85.9
Politics and government	Males	9	88.9	N/A	44.4	N/A	73.3	N/A
	Females	22	95.5		72.2		95.5	
Psychology	Males							
	Females	NA						
Religious studies	Males	2	100	98.0	50.0	43.3	80.0	83.5
	Females	8	100	99.1	62.5	48	92.5	86.4
Sociology	Males	1	100	97.6	0.0	38.0	80.0	79.3
	Females	11	100	98.5	63.6	46.4	89.1	85.1
Spanish	Males	2	100	98.7	50.0	47.2	80.0	85.6
	Females	7	100	98.1	28.6	51.3	77.1	87.4
Sports/PE studies	Males	3	100	97.6	33.3	24.8	86.7	71.1
	Females	3	100	98.7	33.3	41.4	86.7	82.3

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on the course leading to AS and A level qualifications in English literature in Years 12 and 13. Lessons were also sampled in modern languages. These had excellent features: planning, teacher-student relationships, focus to lessons, challenge, pace and obvious enjoyment of the language.

English literature

Overall provision is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A2 results are excellent and represent very good achievement
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and teaching skills that promote a very good quality of learning for all students
- The management of the joint provision for English in the sixth form is excellent
- Although students have good information and communication technology skills computers are not available for use in most classrooms and the poor quality of some classrooms limits the range of activities

Commentary

129. In 2003, standards at A level were very high in comparison with the national average with the majority of students being awarded the highest grades. The trend in the last three years has been for results to be similarly high and for retention rates to be very good. Standards are equally high in the present Year 13 classes. Far more female students study literature.
130. Achievement is very good because of the quality of teaching and the very positive attitudes and response of the majority of students. Students on the AS course have a wide range of ability. Nevertheless, they achieve very well because difficult text such as Chaucer is made accessible and students are helped to appreciate the characters and the humour of *The Canterbury Tales*. The careful use of background information enables higher attaining students to understand and explain literary conventions such as courtly love.
131. In Year 13 work students receive a high level of support with unfamiliar vocabulary and the historical context so that they develop an in-depth understanding of what it meant to be a soldier during the Great War. Assessment is very effective, work is marked very carefully and

comments provide clear advice on strategies for improvement. Students are given valuable opportunities to reflect on and evaluate their own and others' work. They are confident in using websites for research and use computers for written work but there are only limited computer facilities for presentations in the classrooms.

132. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge and experience in teaching at this higher level ensures very effective learning in the classroom. A particular feature of the teaching is the way in which students' ideas and contributions are valued, used and developed for the benefit of the whole class. Teachers encourage discussion and the sharing of ideas well but poor accommodation at times limits the range of activities.
133. Excellent departmental management ensures that English is very well taught and that resources and assessment have been developed very well. Teachers from the two schools share responsibility for different units of the course and all aspects of examination preparation are very effective. The subject is very well led. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

134. Standards are similar to those found in sixth forms where attainment on entry is above the national average. Students have good or very good skills in writing and the necessary reading skills for research in academic subjects. Oral work is very good and students articulate their views well. In English students skim and scan texts efficiently and most students use their drafting and redrafting skills appropriately in writing in all subjects. Written work varies in standard and there are some errors in spelling and punctuation but the majority of students have sufficient skills to ensure at least a C grade on completion of their course. The libraries in both schools are used well.

MATHEMATICS

The focus of the inspection was on the course leading to AS and A-level qualifications in mathematics in Years 12 and 13. A-level further mathematics was also sampled. Here, the teaching was very good and standards well above average. Some work is of the highest quality and consistent with initial requirements for studying mathematics at undergraduate level.

Mathematics

Overall provision is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising quickly and are now well above average overall
- The quality of teaching and learning is good, and students are achieving well
- There are some weaknesses in students' presentation of diagrammatic and written work

Commentary

135. In 2002, A level results were average overall but they improved sharply in 2003. Current standards in Year 13 are well above average and demonstrate a further substantial rise. In 2003, well over half of the students gained the highest grades A and B whilst all except two passed in the range A to E. Results at AS level and to a lesser extent at A level in 2003, although strong in terms of higher grades, did represent some underachievement for a small group of males. For the last two years, female students have outperformed males at A-level mathematics by approximately the same margin as they have nationally.
136. Current standards in Year 13 are well above average and represent good achievement for male and female students. There is little evidence of any underachievement. Students frequently show very good numerical and algebraic skills, which allow them to work quickly and

logically through challenging written questions. A strong feature is their ability to work out solutions to problems without undue dependence on their teachers. Written work is generally presented well, logically sequenced and sufficiently detailed to satisfy examiners at this level. However, a few students, particularly males, do not do justice to the depth of their knowledge and understanding because their presentation of diagrams is weak and they do not show enough working during problem solving exercises. Students in Year 12 are also doing well. Achievement is good; especially as some students' GCSE results in mathematics are rather modest for supporting study at this level.

137. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The best teaching anticipates the difficulties that students will encounter and has support for these built into the planning of lessons. Questioning of students in class checks understanding well and enables teachers to know when to proceed to new areas of learning. However, some students would justifiably appreciate more of their homework to be assessed against A level grade criteria. Formal assessment through testing is good. It enables students to have regular feedback, and keeps them well informed about how they are getting on.
138. Leadership and management of mathematics at this level are good. The course is well organised between the two schools to ensure that all elements of the syllabus are completed on time and in sufficient depth to enable most students to reach their potential. However, there is insufficient teaching time on the timetable to enable the weaker students to understand and explore fully all of the topics that they need to study. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good

Mathematics across the curriculum

139. The majority of students have good mathematical skills that support them effectively in their study in other subjects. Most students, both males and females, join the sixth form with GCSE grades in mathematics that are generally well above the average. This provides them with a firm foundation for continuing well in courses that require good numerical skills. However, there is no overall coordination or monitoring of the development of numeracy across the sixth form and so there is no safety net for the few students who are insecure in the use of mathematical skills.

SCIENCE

Biology, chemistry and physics at both AS and A2 levels were inspected in full.

Biology

Overall provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching is very good leading to very good learning
- The students have a very good attitude to work
- There is a very good range of modern text books, specialist magazines and monographs.
- The monitoring of key skills needs developing

Commentary

140. The A level results in 2003 were well above the national average with all students achieving a pass and nearly two-thirds achieving a higher grade of A or B. The proportion of students achieving a higher grade improved from 2002. The number of students studying has increased considerably in recent years. Retention of students is excellent and all students complete the course.
141. Standards in the current Year 12 and 13 are well above national expectations. This represents very good achievement for many of the students who enter the sixth form with a full range of GCSE pass grades. There is a strong value added element with many advanced level students in 2003 achieving grades above their predicted grades based on their GCSE performance.
142. Students have a very positive attitude to their studies and as a result have made considerable gains in knowledge and understanding since GCSE. While most students are competent in numeracy and information and communication technology, their development in these key skills is not monitored.

143. Teaching is very good and this has led to very good learning. The teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of biology and this allows them to clarify any misconceptions the students may have. Lesson planning is very good and because of this, practical work forms an important part of the coursework and this is well supported by a wealth of up-to-date texts. Students know what they need to do to improve as a result of regular testing and focused feedback using examination board criteria and grades. There is also considerable self evaluation.
144. Management of the subject is good and ensures that students are aware of how well they are doing. Innovation is strong and curricular changes from linear to modular have helped students to raise standards. A high priority is placed on sharing good practice, which exposes the students to a wider range of strategies therefore improving their learning. The use of information and communication technology has improved considerably since the previous inspection and students regularly use computers to analyse large-scale ecology data.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching encourages students to make good progress in lessons
- Students' very good attitudes assist their learning
- Standards in external examinations are good
- Good use of information and communication technology supports teaching and learning

Commentary

145. A level and AS level results in chemistry are good and well above the national averages. In terms of students' prior attainment, A and AS results indicate satisfactory achievement.
146. Standards observed during inspection are high. Year 13 students showed good understanding of the theoretical basis of buffer solutions. Similarly, Year 12 students used previous knowledge of enthalpy to calculate the enthalpy involved in various reactions. A small number of students, particularly those with limited GCSE grades, found some of the concepts difficult but achievement was generally very good.
147. Teachers make good use of their subject expertise to enthuse and encourage students to do their best. They plan their lessons well so that students are interested in the course and have the motivation to work hard. Good use is made of computers in chemistry teaching. Students are provided with appropriate challenges, which enhance their learning. Student motivation is very high and they make excellent use of their time and the resources available.
148. Management and administration of the course are therefore essentially co-operative but work well thanks to the professionalism of all the staff concerned. The high academic standards achieved by the students are linked to the good resources, technical help and accommodation available in chemistry. Student numbers in chemistry are large.
149. Since the last inspection student numbers have remained high and external examination results have been good. Therefore, overall progress since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

Physics

Overall provision is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this to plan lessons with a variety of different activities to stimulate and maintain students' interest
- Very good relationships and excellent care for the students lead to good progress being made
- Key skills are not monitored.

Commentary

150. In 2003 half of the students gained grades A or B, improving on the figure for 2002 for A2 physics. In both 2002 and 2003 the males' results were broadly in line with the national average. Very few females study the subject.
151. Students join the AS courses with a range of abilities and experience in physics. These students generally make the progress that is expected of them. Taking these factors into account, achievement is good. There is a big gender imbalance in all groups (small numbers of female students compared to male) but this does not affect the progress of either. Retention of students from Year 12 to Year 13 is high.
152. The quality of teaching is always good in Year 12 and very good in Year 13. Very good resources allow a wide range of practical activities to be incorporated into the schemes of work. The students appreciate the range of teaching styles offered as a result of having two different teachers. The support that is given to the students is excellent. They are offered small group and one-to-one tutorials during lunchtimes and are able to join a different class either for consolidation of difficult concepts or when they have missed a lesson through absence.
153. Subject leadership is very good. The two heads of department work very cooperatively although, at times, communication is difficult. Management is good, supporting the less experienced teachers through the sharing of good practice and with effective delegation of responsibilities.
154. Since the last inspection there are better opportunities for independent learning by all students. Computers are available for individual work and are used regularly. There are very few females choosing physics as their third or fourth AS level. In consequence the calibre of female students is high but the numbers are low.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus of the inspection was on information and communication technology courses at AS and A2 level. However, some lessons in computing were also observed and are included in the report

Overall provision is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' attitudes and ability to work independently are very good
- Achievement of females is unsatisfactory
- Strategic planning is a weakness

Commentary

155. Students have above average GCSE grades when they join the sixth form. In 2003, examination results in the A level in ICT were broadly in line with the national average overall: one in four students obtained A–B grades, and nine out of ten A–E grades. Males performed better than females and their results were above the national average. The examination results in A level computing were above the national average: half of the students obtained A–B grades and all obtained A–E grades. Standards in the lessons seen varied but were above average overall. Achievement is broadly satisfactory with some females working below their potential.
156. The quality of teaching and learning varies but is good overall. All lessons are well planned and topics introduced effectively. Teachers give good help and advice in practical activities and students know how to improve. Students work independently on coursework assignments very well. There is good emphasis on the requirements of the examination. In a small number of less effective lessons, the attention of the teachers is too focused on small groups of vocal students and the pace of lessons is too slow.
157. The management of the courses is very good. Whilst the heads of the curriculum areas in the two schools work harmoniously together there is insufficient strategic planning of the subject. Progress since the last inspection is good.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

158. Many students join the sixth form with above average competencies in the use of information and communication technology. They are able to apply their skills in some of their sixth form courses to good effect. However, in a few subjects such as English and business studies weaknesses in accommodation and equipment are restricting the development of students' skills and having a negative impact on their learning.

HUMANITIES

Four subjects were inspected fully at both AS and A2 levels. These include history, geography, politics and government and psychology. There are two separate courses for A level history. These are early modern history and modern history. Because a considerably larger number of students study modern history the inspection of history has concentrated on this course.

Lessons in A level religious education were sampled. In this subject standards are very high. Students learn and achieve very well because they are taught very well by highly qualified and experienced specialists and because of the very good attitudes they bring to their work.

Geography

Overall provision is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All teachers provide very good support for students' learning and relationships are very good
- Although marking and assessment procedures are good, there is inconsistency of practice between teachers
- There is very good provision for fieldwork; it is well managed and supports students' coursework

Commentary

159. Standards overall are well above average. Results in examinations at AS level are high, and at A2 level results are well above the national average. Students' achievement overall is very

good. However, there is a significant difference between the achievement of males and females. Females usually join the course with higher grades at GCSE than males. This explains the lower proportion of males with high grades at AS and A2 but does not explain the larger proportion of males who do not reach their target grade.

160. Students have good key skills. Personal investigations and coursework are well executed. Students' files are mostly well organised with some excellent detailed essays and case studies, but lower attaining students sometimes leave out important detail and evidence, and may include some inaccuracies and irrelevant material. Lower attaining males have less well developed study skills than females, but there is improvement during the more demanding A2 course. There is a high retention rate for the A2 course leading to large classes.
161. Teaching is good overall but very good and excellent lessons were also seen. In an excellent lesson on the use of a statistical method, calm, probing questioning led to very good responses from students and excellent concentration and learning. The emphasis on geographical testing throughout ensured that students both understood the method and its practical applications to the subject. In other lessons teachers over explained information or added too much, and limited students' learning opportunities.
162. There is dual management of the department and both leadership and management is good overall. Resources and fieldwork are shared and used well to support students but personal study space is limited. Large classes place additional pressure on resources. There is variation in the quality of assessment and the monitoring of student progress and this needs to be standardised. The new format of the sixth form makes comparison difficult but overall standards remain well above average and improvement is therefore satisfactory.

History

Overall provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above the national average
- Teaching is very good resulting in very good achievement
- Leadership and management are both very good
- A small number of students do not achieve as well as they should
- The opportunities for the enrichment of the curriculum are insufficient

Commentary

163. In 2003 examinations, the percentage of students who gained a grade A or B in modern history was well above the national average. The attainment of females was higher than that of males. Standards seen during the inspection confirm that students currently in Year 13 are working at levels well above what is seen nationally.
164. Students join the course in Year 12 with standards in history which are generally well above the national average, although the range of abilities is wide. The majority of students achieve very well. In the current Year 13 there are a small number of males who despite having reached good GCSE grades did not make enough progress at AS level and are therefore not on track to reach the grades at A level of which they are capable.
165. The quality of teaching is very good overall. There is a high level of challenge and expectation and, in particular teachers make very good use of probing questioning in order to make students think hard. In turn, students are very prepared to hypothesise, knowing that their ideas will be listened to with respect and they make very good progress from hearing the ideas of others. Students are given a very clear picture of the criteria by which A level grades are

awarded and how to answer questions in order to gain high marks. Teachers provide very good reading lists and high quality advice on the use of these.

166. The quality of leadership and management are both very good. The heads of department from both schools work with a high level of co-operation and regular contact. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

Politics and government

Overall provision is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results are well above average and achievement is very good
- The teaching is motivating, and on occasions inspiring, and generates a 'buzz' of interest and enthusiasm
- A programme of visits and work experience brings students into contact with professional politicians and authors

Commentary

167. In 2003, examination results at all levels were well above average with female students doing significantly better than the males. The proportion of students passing AS level in 2003 at grades A-E and at the higher grades was also well above average. The trend over the last three years has been to sustain a high level of performance with female students consistently outperforming males. Over half of the students achieve a grade higher than their target minimum grades and roughly a third achieve two grades higher, a strong indicator of very high achievement.
168. That high level of achievement is the outcome of very good teaching and learning. The level of teachers' subject expertise is very high and relationships between teachers and students are excellent. Consequently students work confidently and positively, think forensically and critically, whilst engaged in rigorous but thoughtful dialogue either with their peers or their teachers. Dialogues are based on wide reading and internet research. Role play was used most effectively to promote a better understanding of the complex qualified majority voting system by which legislation is passed in the European Union.
169. Leadership and management of the department are excellent. The assessment of students' work is thorough and developmental. The work of the department is monitored through peer lesson observation and the moderation of students' extended writing. Although students are very articulate and their written styles mature, spelling errors and poor phraseology occur too frequently. The department has a positive literacy policy to support weaknesses identified in the work of some students. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

Psychology

Overall provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Enthusiastic teaching by highly qualified teachers promotes good achievement
- Very good relationships and students' excellent attitudes contribute significantly to students' progress
- Effective procedures for assessing students' work, together with very good support and guidance, promote good learning
- Some male students do not achieve as well as they should at the end of Year 12

Commentary

170. Results at A level show steady improvement over the last three years. Virtually all students obtain grades in the A to E range and in 2003, almost two-thirds obtained A or B grades. These results were above the 2003 national average. One of the features of the results is improvement in performance of male students. These results represent good achievement, on the part of both male and female students, with virtually all obtaining grades above those predicted on the basis of previous performance. Results at AS level also show improvement. After two years in which results were affected by staffing difficulties, results rose sharply in 2003, particularly those of males. However, females significantly outperformed males at the higher grades. While the achievement of females is broadly satisfactory, there is an element of underachievement on the part of males. One of the contributory factors to this underachievement is that some students with weak GCSE results choose to take psychology in Year 12 because it is a 'new' subject. However, after commencing the course they experience many difficulties and do not gain the depth of knowledge necessary for examination success.
171. Inspection evidence shows standards in Years 12 and 13 to be above course expectations. The quality of students' oral and written work is very good. They are willing to grasp new ideas and concepts, and in discussion, they express their points of view thoughtfully and without rancour.
172. The quality of teaching is very good. The skilful use of questioning helps to clarify students' understanding of psychological terms and concepts. Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject motivates students who eagerly engage in the many small-group activities that are a consistent feature of lessons. Learning activities are varied and are particularly effective in engaging the interest of male students and are contributing to the good progress they make in Year 13.
173. Subject leadership is very good and provides a clear direction for development.. Contributory factors to the continuing rise in standards and the increasing rise in student numbers are very good support and guidance, and very good assessment procedures that are used effectively to provide students with clear information on the progress they are making. Subject management is very good. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection and the subject is well placed to continue this improvement.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

No subjects were inspected fully but design and technology was sampled. A and AS level lessons in food/nutrition, textiles and graphics were seen. In all of the lessons seen, teaching and learning were at least good and achievement reflected students' capability.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design was inspected fully. Music and music technology were sampled. Standards and numbers in both the music and music technology courses in the sixth form are rising and the resources for these smaller numbers are very good. There are six computer work-stations and a recording studio. One lesson of theatre studies was sampled. In this lesson students' response was good and the standards achieved were above expectations.

Art and design

Overall provision is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A level examination results are above national averages
- Teaching is consistently very good, across both years
- Unclear leadership impacts negatively on the achievement of some students
- Shared accommodation and some overcrowded conditions logistically limit the range of media and the scale of work open to students

Commentary

174. The school currently offers AS level art for Year 12 students, and the majority convert this into a full GCE A level examination at the end of Year 13. Both courses have become increasingly popular in recent years, with the AS cohort doubling in size since 2001.
175. Overall, standards in the AS level examination are below national averages. Standards at A level, however, are above national averages. This represents a clear improvement in results since the last report. The majority of students speak with confidence about their work. High attaining pupils are particularly well taught. They become extremely competent in a range of mainly, but not exclusively, two-dimensional work. Chosen studies are well researched and conclusions personal and convincing. Such students have a very good understanding of artistic language and knowledge of, and sensitivity towards, the work of a wide range of contemporary artists and those from other periods. Less competent students, however, are not as successful. They are occasionally confused by what they perceive to be conflicting advice, and their work is sometimes tentative and uncertain. Unsatisfactory leadership and management results in inconsistencies in the support and guidance provided.
176. Teaching and learning in art are consistently very good. All teachers have a clear perception of the course requirements and the units of work, prepared jointly by both departments, are well delivered. They successfully lead students through a series of activities that ensure all assessment objectives are effectively covered. As each teaching group is shared between two teachers, students benefit from a wealth of experience and support, which the majority of them welcome. Three-dimensional work is less evident, and some students feel unable to pursue this option because of their lack of experience in the techniques that they would favour. Work is also limited in scale, partly as a result of the nomadic existence of the student body as they are taught in two different locations each week. The absence of dedicated studio accommodation, beyond a small room adjacent to the Marling department, together with the occasional overcrowded conditions in classrooms, adds to the difficulties of their situation. A small darkroom is also currently out of use.
177. Leadership is unsatisfactory. There is no clear vision for the long term future of the joint department. Neither does anyone have overall responsibility for art provision. Although both schools acknowledge that the current situation is unsatisfactory, there is a lack of clarity about the way forward. Issues identified as impacting upon the achievement of some students, have yet to be adequately addressed.
178. Day-to-day management is satisfactory. Teachers have worked together to try to offer students consistency of provision and support. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

No subjects inspected.

BUSINESS

All AS and A2 level courses in business education were fully inspected.

Business education

Overall provision is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Above average standards of work and good achievement
- Good teaching results in good learning
- Good day-to-day management but no overall responsibility for the subject is restricting development

- There is no study-skills induction course and few opportunities to visit local businesses
- There are weaknesses in the accommodation and computer resources

Commentary

179. Recent A level examination results have improved, with results in 2003 being above the average. There is no significant difference between the standards attained by male and female students although more female students exceeded expectations based on prior attainment. The retention rate on the AS and A level course was very high. A high proportion of students continued into Year 13.
180. Standards seen are above the national average on both courses. Achievement is good overall in relationship to prior learning. Students' work develops well over Years 12. With the more advanced work in Year 13, most students progress well but the understanding of theoretical concepts by a few students is insecure. Critical analysis is being progressively developed over Years 12 and 13 but only the higher attainers make use of reading around the subject. Key skills of communication and application of number are at least good. Information and communication technology skills are good but there is less application than in most business studies courses.
181. Overall the quality of teaching is good and some very good teaching was observed. Students are given good opportunities to contribute to discussion and develop ideas, with male students responding far more positively than female students. However, male students' written work is not as developed as that of female students. Students particularly in Year 12 take insufficient responsibility for their own learning and rely too much on their teacher. Independent learning is insufficiently developed and students do not prepare themselves adequately for active participation in lessons. Overall the assessment of students' work is good.
182. The day-to-day joint management of business studies is good and overall leadership is satisfactory. The two subject co-ordinators work co-operatively together although no one person has the responsibility for maintaining an overview of courses or student performance. Resources are satisfactory overall but there is a shortage of Year 13 textbooks and computers to enhance teaching and promote independent learning. Accommodation in both the specialist business studies rooms is sub-standard, with limited scope for displays. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

No subjects inspected

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

No subjects inspected

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	4	3
How inclusive the school is		2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	3	3
Overall standards achieved		2
Pupils' achievement	4	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		2
Attendance	2	2
Attitudes	2	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
The quality of education provided by the school		2
The quality of teaching	2	2
How well pupils learn	2	2
The quality of assessment	3	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		3
Accommodation and resources	6	6
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	3
The leadership and management of the school		3
The governance of the school	5	5
The leadership of the headteacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	3	2
The effectiveness of management	3	3

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