

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **CHIPPING CAMPDEN SCHOOL**

Chipping Campden

LEA area: Gloucester

Unique reference number: 115765

Headteacher: Mr J Price

Lead inspector: Mr R Drew

Dates of inspection: 13 – 17 October 2003

Inspection number: 259176

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1133
School address:	Cider Mill Lane Chipping Campden
Postcode:	GL55 6HU
Telephone number:	01386 840216
Fax number:	01386 840498
Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Lt Col G S Furtado MBE
Date of previous inspection:	2 March 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is large, serving a relatively prosperous rural community. With some exceptions, overall social and economic conditions are much more advantageous than nationally. The pupils are nearly all white, with less than one per cent coming from ethnic minority backgrounds. English is the mother tongue of virtually all pupils, and very few have special educational needs. Attainment on entry to the school is above average. The school has Technology College status and is seeking the Artsmark Award.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
7281	Bob Drew	Lead inspector	
9710	Elizabeth Burgess	Lay inspector	
4677	Valerie Banks	Team inspector	Geography Geography (sixth form)
30899	Ken Boden	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology Design and technology (sixth form)
18447	Ron Cohen	Team inspector	History Business education (sixth form)
19586	Wendy Easterby	Team inspector	English English (sixth form)
14596	Anthony Fiddian-Green	Team inspector	Special educational needs Religious education
31100	Geoffrey Hunter	Team inspector	Mathematics Mathematics (sixth form)
21785	Veronica Kerr	Team inspector	Science Physics (sixth form)
7958	Georgina Lewis	Team inspector	Citizenship Media studies (sixth form)
11975	Thelma McIntosh-Clark	Team inspector	Music Drama (sixth form)
16950	Caroline Orr	Team inspector	English as an additional language Modern foreign languages French (sixth form)
31963	Malcolm Padmore	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Information and communication technology (sixth form)
12972	Anthony Weaden	Team inspector	Physical education Physical education (sixth form)

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a very good school with some excellent features. Leadership and management and teaching and learning are very effective, enabling pupils and student to achieve very well. While spending is higher than average, value for money is very good.**

**The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:**

#### *Strengths*

- Pupils and students achieve very well in relation to their capabilities
- Pupils' standards are well above average at each phase of their education
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good
- The leadership of the headteacher is excellent and other key staff lead very well overall
- Leadership and management are excellent in art, science and design and technology
- The school's links with parents are excellent
- There is a very good formal curriculum, with equally impressive extra-curricular opportunities
- The quality of care is excellent. Pupils are very effectively involved in shaping school policy and practice and they respond with very good attendance, attitudes and behaviour

#### *Weaknesses*

- The school has no major weaknesses: all aspects of its work match or exceed national standards. There are areas capable of further improvement and these are listed at the end of this summary and in the body of the full report.

The effectiveness of the school has improved considerably since the previous inspection, even though the school was then judged favourably. There has been very good progress on the key issues of 1997, especially in extending the curriculum, refurbishing the library, improving business studies provision, increasing ICT facilities and meeting religious education requirements in the sixth form. In addition, standards have risen at every phase, facilities are radically improved for the sixth form, music, art and physical education, and the already good quality of teaching is now even better.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

**The achievement of pupils and students is very good. They enter the school with above-average prior attainment but reach standards that are well above national averages.**

At the end of Year 9, results in National Curriculum tests in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science are well above average. The work of current Year 9 pupils matches these impressive levels. Standards are well above average in geography, history, art and ICT and are above average in all other subjects. Such attainment indicates very good achievement across Years 7 to 9, due to very effective teaching and equally positive attitudes from pupils. Achievement is very good in science, geography, history, art, ICT and religious education and good in all other subjects.

At the end of Year 11, GCSE/GNVQ results are well above average and indicate further very good progress in Years 10 and 11. Standards of work are also well above average in English, mathematics, science, geography, history, art, design and technology and ICT, and above average in all other subjects. Pupils' achievement across Years 10 and 11 is very good in the majority of subjects and good in English, mathematics, physical education and music.

Pupils with special educational needs and the gifted and talented make good overall progress. Support and teaching adapted to the needs of all are good overall, but vary from very effective special educational needs provision in English to broadly satisfactory in mathematics. Gifted pupils are invariably stretched in science lessons, but provision is satisfactory rather than very good in music and physical education. Girls attain higher standards than boys. The gap is slightly wider than nationally at the end of Year 9, but similar to the national difference in Year 11. The school has worked hard to narrow the gap, which has recently halved in Year 9 test results in science.

Results in recent years at the end of Year 13 have been well above national averages. Achievement has been good. Currently the progress being made in lessons is very good, reflecting the recent improvement in leadership and support and monitoring of students' progress in the sixth form. Girls' attainment is higher than boys' and the gap is greater than nationally.

**Pupils demonstrate very positive personal qualities. Their social and moral development is very good and they show good awareness of the cultural and spiritual dimension to life.**

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good both in lessons and around school. They are polite, mature and very socially confident and aware. In the sixth form, the work ethos is good and moving towards very good. Students also take on many responsibilities that contribute significantly to the life of the school.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The overall quality of education is very good. Teaching is very effective and the curriculum provides far better than average opportunities for pupils and students.**

Teaching is very effective, with virtually all lessons having at least satisfactory teaching; in 80 per cent, it is good or better. Teaching quality is consistent across year groups and is excellent in several subjects. Teachers show very good expertise in their subject, ensure very good behaviour and set very high expectations. As a result, learning is very good, also because pupils have very positive attitudes to school and their studies. Teaching is very good in the great majority of subjects, and is good in English, mathematics, modern languages, physical education and music. Where teaching is very good, there is very effective use of assessment data to plot progress and shape teaching to meet their needs: in religious education, this practice is excellent. The range of teaching styles is broad in these subjects and actively involves the learners in a wide variety of ways. Where teaching and learning are good, these features are present but less consistent and prominent.

**The quality of education available to pupils is enhanced greatly by the breadth of the formal curriculum and its successful adaptation to the needs of different pupils groups.**

The school has expanded its range of courses for those in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form, bringing in a good range of vocational options as well as additional GCSEs and AS and A levels in new or minority subjects. In addition, care for pupils and the guidance and support they receive from tutors, subject teachers and other staff are very good, allowing them to proceed unhindered with their work, resolving problems quickly and making good course choices. Very effective parental support and valuable links with the community further help them to acquire wider experiences.



## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The overall quality of leadership and management in the school is very good. The headteacher gives excellent leadership and the team of senior managers work very effectively together, giving a clear lead, setting an excellent tone and supporting colleagues very well. Other key staff, especially heads of year and heads of departments provide very good management; in art, science and design and technology the quality is excellent. The governing body has a detailed knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses and provides very effective support and strategic guidance. The community's use of the school and other aspects of this partnership are very well managed. Financial management is excellent and the school provides very good value for money.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents hold very positive views of this school, reflected in the over-subscription for Year 7 places every year. The questionnaire returns and the overwhelming weight of comment at the parents' meeting indicate very strong support. Pupils and sixth form students express far higher levels of satisfaction than is usual.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The most important things the school should do to build on its current successes and improve still further are:

- Ensure that the best practice already present in many subjects becomes the norm in all subjects with regard to:
  - the use of assessment to guide future learning and planning
  - widening the variety of teaching styles and strategies to maximise pupils' active involvement in lessons
  - meeting the needs of pupils with special educational needs and those on the gifted and talented register
  - ensuring good access to and use of ICT across the curriculum
  - using successful strategies to further reduce the gap between boys' and girls' attainment
- Take all possible steps to greatly increase dining and library accommodation, provide soundproofing in music and bring improvements to science rooms

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that a daily Act of Worship is available to pupils

## **THE SIXTH FORM**

There are 220 students, virtually all coming from Year 11 of the main school. Over 30 formal courses are offered as well as a strong enhancement programme.

## **OVERALL EVALUATION**

The effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Students achieve well in relation to their capabilities and reach well above average standards. Teaching and learning are very good, and post-16 leadership is very effective. The new accommodation has helped curricular expansion and given students far better facilities. Overall, the sixth form has improved significantly since the previous inspection and its cost effectiveness is now good.

### **The main strengths and weaknesses are:**

#### *Strengths*

- Standards for the sixth form as a whole are well above average
- Students achieve well across Years 12 and 13
- Teaching and learning are very good
- The sixth form is very well led and managed

- Overall facilities are very good
- Students have very positive views of the sixth form and all that it offers
- The formal curriculum has far better breadth and balance than is common and there is a very valuable enrichment programme

#### *Relative weaknesses*

- Recent examination results in mathematics, media studies, French, sports studies and drama have been significantly below the sixth form's otherwise impressive levels
- While facilities for research using ICT are good, those for book-based research are too limited
- Teaching is currently good rather than very good in mathematics, media studies, physical education and business studies: here and to a lesser extent in other subjects there is scope for further improvement in the variety of teaching and learning strategies used
- The work of tutors is satisfactory overall, but the very best practice is not always emulated
- Students' approach to, work, especially independent study, is improving, but still falls short of their very positive overall attitude to the school.

### **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.

<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
English, languages and communication	<p><b>English language and literature:</b> provision is <b>very good</b> here and in English literature. Teaching and learning and the enthusiasm of students are all very effective.</p> <p><b>French:</b> provision is <b>good</b>. While recent results have been below average, current standards are above average and the quality of teaching and learning is good.</p>
Mathematics	<p><b>Mathematics:</b> provision is <b>good</b>. Standards are above average. Fewer high-attaining students take AS and A level than might be expected, but those on the courses achieve well in relation to their capabilities.</p>
Science	<p><b>Physics:</b> provision is <b>very good</b>. Very effective teaching and learning result in significantly greater take-up rates and have enabled standards to be maintained at levels well above the national average.</p>
Information and communication technology	<p><b>ICT AVCE:</b> provision is <b>good</b>. Results are above average and currently teaching and learning are very good.</p>
Humanities	<p><b>Geography:</b> provision is <b>very good</b>. Standards are well above average, reflecting very good teaching and equally effective learning from highly motivated students.</p>
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	<p><b>DT Product Design:</b> provision is <b>very good</b>. A level results are well above national average with students gaining a very high proportion of A and B grades. Teaching is very good under excellent leadership. The course is popular and numbers are growing.</p>
Visual and performing arts and media	<p><b>Drama:</b> provision is now <b>very good</b>. Recent results have been broadly average, but new, very effective management has encouraged very good teaching and learning. The standards seen during the inspection were well above average.</p> <p><b>Media studies:</b> provision is <b>good</b>. Standards are average and teaching and learning good overall.</p>
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	<p><b>Physical Education and Sports Studies A level:</b> provision is <b>good</b>. Current standards are higher than the broadly average ones in the 2002 results. Teaching is good. There is further enrichment in provision through the Community Sports Leader Award and a recreational programme available to all.</p>

**AVCE Business Studies** provision is **good**. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which they impart with enthusiasm. Students are inclined to be positive recipients rather than active participants in their own learning.

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

## **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

The advice, guidance and support offered to students are very good. Careers advice and guidance about application to university are especially effective and the degree of involvement of students in decisions about school life is excellent.

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

The sixth form is very effectively led and managed. The present head of sixth form is building on work done by previous colleagues and other managers and ensures an effective sixth form with a very positive ethos. Students are well matched to courses and very few leave before completing their course. The breadth of curriculum and the level of overall standards have risen noticeably in recent years. Sixth form tutors and heads of subjects co-operate well to ensure that good support and advice, as well as high expectations, are placed before students.

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

Students generally hold very positive views about the sixth form, especially about the quality of teaching, accessibility of staff for discussion and advice and the new facilities available to them. They rate the leadership of the school and the sixth form highly. Their attitudes in lessons are virtually always positive, but there is some variability in the level of responsibility students take in planning their own research and in their use of private study.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

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

The overall achievement of pupils is very good. They build most effectively on their above-average standards on entry to the school and reach well above average standards by the time they leave. Girls attain higher standards than boys, with the gap being more marked than the national one in Years 9 and 13 but less marked in Year 11.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall achievement of pupils across Years 7 to 11 is very good and is so in many subjects, notably geography, history, religious education, art, science, modern languages and design and technology.
- The collective standards reached by pupils by the end of Year 9 are well above average.
- Many subjects have well above average standards in Year 9, notably: geography, history, art, English, mathematics, science and ICT.
- In both GCSE results and in Year 11 work seen, standards are well above average in geography, history, design and technology, art, mathematics, English science and ICT.
- By the end of Year 11, achievement is good but less marked than for the school as a whole in English, mathematics, music and physical education.
- In Years 9 and 13, the attainment of boys is noticeably lower than that of girls.
- Pupils deemed gifted or talented and those with special educational needs make slightly less progress in relation to their capabilities than other pupils.

#### Commentary

1. Overall, pupils achieve very well across Years 7 to 11, largely because the vast majority of lessons are well or very well taught, and because pupils' longer-term progress is supported by very effective pastoral and departmental management. Achievement is further helped by pupils adopting a highly positive attitude to learning, the result of both the school's establishing of a strong work ethic and its excellent relationships with very supportive parents. Pupils enter the school with prior attainment which is above average, though not greatly so, and proceed to acquire knowledge and skills at a rapid rate, so that in Year 9 National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science, well over 80 per cent of pupils reach level 5, when nationally the figure is in the 60s. Pupils also exceed national proportions of level 6 and above by an equally wide margin. In GCSE examinations, the school regularly has around 70 per cent of pupils gaining 5 or more A\* to C grades, while the national percentage has just reached 50.

#### Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2002

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.8 (36.4)	33.3 (33.0)
Mathematics	37.5 (37.6)	34.7 (34.4)
Science	35.2 (36.0)	33.3 (33.1)

*There were 181 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

2. A wide range subjects sustains this general level of success. In some GCSE subjects, notably science, geography, design and technology, ICT and history, pupils in 2002 did even better than in their personal performance in other subjects. These particularly successful subjects have several features in common: departmental management is very effective, sometimes excellent, and leads to imaginative programmes of work, very high expectations and consistent

use of best practice; assessment is very well used to monitor and direct pupils' progress; and close attention is given to the distinctive needs of gifted and talented pupils or those with special educational needs.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	68.4 (76.9)	49.9 (48.4)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	97.7 (97.6)	90.9 (90.9)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	47.6 (49.4)	39.8 (39.0)

*There were 177 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

3. In a minority of subjects, pupils achieve well but are capable of even more. In English, mathematics, music and physical education, for instance, long-term gains by the end of Year 11 are good by national standards but lack the dramatic "added-value" seen in science, geography and other subjects referred to above. They use assessment less effectively and make less, but not inadequate, provision for gifted and talented pupils. Teaching and management have been generally good rather than very good, though in English, for instance, new leadership has led to the recent introduction of many of the key features of the most successful departments.
4. Pupils with special educational needs generally make good progress, achieve well, and reach good standards compared to their previous attainment. The very good relationships in the school and the good knowledge of teachers and learning support assistants help pupils to feel confident and secure. Parents are pleased with pupils' rate of progress and the very caring ethos of the school. However, the focus of achievement is on English and literacy, and there is sometimes insufficient attention to mathematics and numeracy. Support assistants are of good quality, but their limited numbers mean that many lessons in subjects other than English lack support when it is needed. Pupils who are gifted and talented also achieve well overall. However, the provision of extension work for them is variable and at GCSE, in around half of their subjects, including English, mathematics and music, they do not achieve as highly as they could: they gain a smaller proportion than expected of the very highest grades in their examinations.
5. Boys in this school exceed the national average for their gender in tests and examinations, but girls exceed their gender average by an even wider margin at the ages of 14 and 18. In GCSE examinations, the gender gap is in line with the national one. The school has taken steps to narrow the gap where it is widest and there are signs that in several subjects, particularly in notably science, the performance of boys has recently improved markedly, reducing the previous margin by half.
6. The tiny minority of pupils with English as an additional language make very good progress: this is due to helpful support they receive, their own keenness to share in the positive approach to learning which typifies the school and the alertness to their needs shown by teachers.

#### **Sixth form**

7. Standards in the sixth form are well above average. Students enter Year 12 with above-average levels of prior attainment, and achieve well. Of the subjects focused upon during the inspection, results in 2002 were well above average in English literature, geography, design and technology, physics and business education. Standards seen during the inspection largely confirm this picture, though in drama, standards in lessons were far higher than in recent examinations, indicating the benefits of recent changes in leadership and management. The

other subjects studied in the sixth form, but not inspected in depth, include ones where standards are well above average, notably art, religious studies, chemistry, health and social care and design and technology (textiles).

#### **Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2002**

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	100 (95.4)	94.8
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	45.0 (41.9)	39.4
Average point score per pupil	85.5 (na)	78.6

*There were 96 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

8. Standards have not been as high in a minority of subjects. In the work seen during the inspection, standards were average in media studies and mathematics and below in German, while French results were below average in the 2002 examinations.
9. Results in recent years have exceeded national averages by varying amounts and until recently the progress made over two years was sound rather than good. However, the school has taken steps to improve standards, and these measures are having a beneficial impact. Current leadership and teaching are both very good: more subjects are using assessment well and students' study habits are good. There is still scope for further improvement. Teaching of the subjects in which students achieve particularly well typically involves students working in pairs and groups, or discussing ideas and information they are handling at some length. Very good use of assessment is another feature of the most successful departments, along with consistent use of technical language and concepts that are specific to the subject and vital to a high-level understanding of it.

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

Pupils' attendance is **very good**. Attitudes and behaviour, including the incidence of exclusions, are **very good**. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **good**.

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

- Pupils in all year groups are supportive of the school and very happy to be here.
- Attendance is well above the national average.
- Pupils behave very well, in line with the school's high expectations for their conduct.
- The level of exclusions is low.
- Pupils are keen to participate in activities outside lessons.
- Pupils respond very well to the school's actions to eliminate all forms of harassment.
- Relationships are very good.
- Pupils' moral and social development is very good.
- Spiritual and cultural awareness is given insufficient prominence in many lessons.
- The school does not provide a daily act of collective worship for pupils as required by law.
- Although punctuality to school is good, there is some lateness to lessons.

#### **Commentary**

10. The school works hard to promote good attendance and parents provide strong support. Registration procedures are efficient, and reasons are sought on the first day of absence. Punctuality is good: pupils arrive on time in the morning, but some lessons start late, in part due to the size of the school site.

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

Authorised absence	
School data	5.3
National data	7.8

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.1
National data	1.2

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

11. The school has high expectations of pupils' conduct, and pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. There is a marked improvement in overall standards of behaviour as pupils adapt to the school's code of conduct. Very good support is provided for pupils whose behaviour or attitude gives cause for concern, and exclusions are kept to a minimum as a result. Work with an advisor from the local education authority has improved attitudes and raised self esteem for groups of Year 8 and Year 11 boys and girls, resulting in better achievement.
12. Pupils enjoy challenging lessons, even when the subject is not their favourite, such as mathematics. They engage well with teachers and show keen interest in their lessons. Stimulating, well-planned lessons promote high standards, especially in science.
13. There is very good participation in extra-curricular activities in sports, music and drama. Rehearsals are well attended and pupils are proud to represent their school. Participation in school life is good, with all pupils able to express their opinions on school council matters.
14. Relationships throughout the school are very good. Pupils co-operate well in lessons: for example, teamwork in physical education in Years 10 and 11 is particularly impressive, and teachers' seating plans promote effective group work in science. Support from peers as 'study buddies' for the few pupils whose first language is not English is very good. In discussions, pupils are respectful of each other's opinions. Bullying is dealt with promptly and effectively, so that the school is free of all forms of harassment. In a Year 7 group where some bullying had been reported, the planned personal, health and social education lesson was changed to address concerns immediately.
15. Pupils' personal development is good. Moral and social education is very good. Pupils have a very good understanding of the principles that distinguish right from wrong, and of the responsibilities that arise from living in a community. In ICT, they learn about the dangers of pornography and Internet fraud. Drama lessons address moral and cultural issues well, for example by acting out a scene in which a parent bullies their child. Religious education makes a strong contribution to the development of pupils' sensitivity to others' feelings and beliefs, but spiritual awareness is insufficiently developed in many lessons, with too little time for pupils to reflect on their place in the world. There are some good spiritual moments, such as the Tiger mural and reflective poems on the weather, but too little attention is given to planning overtly spiritual experiences. While most pupils develop a good understanding of Western culture through the arts, and of artefacts in, for example, design and technology, their awareness of the diversity of cultures is not developed in sufficient depth. Pupils learn about other styles of music, for example the gamelan, and in design and technology they looked at designs of female underwear in terms of the male perception of the female figure.
16. The quality of assemblies is usually good, with strong moral and social messages, and pupils are attentive and reflective. However, pupils attend only once a week, and ideas are not developed at other times, for example in tutor periods. The school fails to provide a daily act of collective worship, which is required by law.
17. Since the last inspection, pupils' attitudes have improved: disaffection among some boys is no longer apparent. There has been some improvement in the provision for spiritual development and in raising awareness of the multicultural nature of British society, but these remain areas

where further improvement is needed. The school still fails to provide a daily act of collective worship.

#### **Sixth form**

18. Students' attendance is **very good**. Attitudes and behaviour in the sixth form are **very good**. Students play a full part in the life of the school and their willingness to take responsibility is **very good**.

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

- Students' attendance is very good.
- Relationships are very good and based on mutual respect.
- Students respond very well to moral and spiritual provision.
- Students are fully involved in the life of the school and in the enrichment activities provided.
- There is some lateness to lessons.
- Some students are too passive in lessons.

#### **Commentary**

19. Attendance of students is very effectively monitored. Punctuality is good, but some lateness to lessons was noted during the inspection.
20. Attitudes to learning and students' behaviour are very good, although in lessons students are sometimes too passive. Students have very good relationships with their teachers and with pupils in the main school. They express their feelings well, for example in discussing the ethics of marketing in business education and in their appreciation of poetry, such as Keats' *Ode to a Grecian Urn*, where they made a very good response to the phrase about passion spent.
21. Students play a full part in the life of school and take part in a range of enrichment activities. Through the sixth form and main school councils they take a lead in many student and pupil initiatives, for example in raising funds for a wide variety of local, national and international charities. All students participate in some form of community work during their time in the sixth form.

#### **Ethnic background of pupils**

#### **Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1123	33	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	1	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	2	0	0
Chinese	4	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	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 quality of education provided by the school is very good. This success is because a very broad and well-adapted curriculum is available to pupils and students, and teaching is of a very good quality overall.**



## Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning across the school are **very good**. The quality of both is consistent between the different stages, and is responsible for pupils' rapid progress in lessons and their very good achievement over time.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Virtually all lessons have at least satisfactory teaching and learning and 40 per cent have very good or excellent teaching.
- Teaching and learning are more consistent than in many schools, so that the quality is very good in the great majority of subjects.
- Teachers have particularly strong expertise in their subject and are very good at encouraging pupils and involving them actively in lessons.
- Teachers are very good at ensuring good behaviour in their lessons.
- Homework arrangements are far more effective than usual.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning and show far better powers of concentration than are common.
- There is scope for some staff to use a greater variety of teaching methods and to use assessment more effectively, even though the overall position is good.
- The needs of pupils with special educational needs and those deemed gifted and talented are met well overall, but not with the same very marked success as other features of teaching.
- In a minority of subjects, teaching and learning are good when in the majority the quality is very good.

### Commentary

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 201 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6 (3%)	75 (37.3 %)	79 (39.3%)	40 (20%)	1 (0.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

22. Teaching is characterised by many strengths, relatively few weaknesses and pockets of excellence. As a result, it leads to very good learning by pupils. A greater than usual proportion of lessons show imaginative yet secure planning, with the onus on pupils to think, discuss and respond to ideas. A high proportion of lessons benefit from teachers' first rate expertise and love of their subject and these factors combine to inspire pupils. Enthusiasm in lessons is refreshingly common.
23. There is good support and monitoring of teaching, especially by senior managers, which has helped to ensure that essential features are always present. Coupled with good appointment procedures and decisions this strategy has virtually eliminated unsatisfactory teaching and learning. All excellent and very good teaching reflects the personal qualities and professionalism of individual staff but its stronger presence in some subjects, such as art, science, geography, design and technology and health and social care, are also the outcome of established good leadership of such departments. Here, heads of departments complement monitoring and support of colleagues by senior managers with their own extensive programme, building up collective and very high expectations, sharing best practice and making sure factors such as provision for pupils with special educational needs and the gifted and talented and the effective use of assessment are fully integrated in the day-to-day work of all colleagues.

24. Very good relationships are typical of lessons in the school. Teachers know their pupils very well, refer to them by name and are much more aware of their interests, aptitudes and needs than is common. They treat pupils with respect and in turn are respected by pupils, which goes a long way to ensuring that behaviour is very good in lessons. Subject teaching is also helped in this respect by the work of tutors and other colleagues, such as mentors and counsellors, since their contribution gives pupils effective personal support and close monitoring of their social and academic progress. Such support removes many hindrances to learning and allows pupils to focus on their studies. On the rare occasions when behaviour threatens to become unacceptable, as in one or two Year 7 lessons, the school's agreed procedures are applied very consistently and to good effect: the very fine behaviour seen in general is clearly achieved rather than simply inherited by the school. Tutors and subject staff collaborate well and between them ensure that administrative tasks, such as checking homework and collating assessment data, are done well. Parents comment very favourably on the way homework is generally used and communication between themselves and teachers kept up-to-date; inspectors fully agree with this view.
25. Pupils of all backgrounds show very positive attitudes to learning in lessons. They are very attentive and show great powers of concentration, a tribute to the frequency with which teachers produce interesting lessons, and a reflection of the very positive ethos of the school. Interviews with inspectors revealed that the pupils are in no doubt that they are in school to learn and that it is a good place in which to do so. The excellent work of tutors contributes to pupils' knowledge of how well they are progressing - they know their current standards and future targets. The strength of parental support also helps to ensure that the school's strong climate for learning is sustained.
26. The quality of teaching in the specialist room for pupils with special educational needs is very good. Individual education plans are clear and have realistic targets, based securely on pupils' needs, though mainly for literacy. As a result, pupils make good progress both in their grasp of the basic skills and in their confidence and attitudes to work. Learning support assistants provide good, focused support in general lessons, where they are present. However, there are not enough of them always to provide support where it is needed. For example, no support was seen in music lessons, and only one lesson of design and technology had a learning support assistant.
27. The quality of teaching and learning for gifted and talented pupils is good overall, resulting in good learning. Subjects use assessment well to identify gifted and talented pupils. However, in some subjects, such as English, mathematics, music and physical education, they are insufficiently challenged and the work is not matched closely enough to their needs. In English, for example, there is no planned extension work. Other subjects, for instance, geography, science, design and technology and art, use information well to plan interesting and challenging tasks.
28. Teaching and learning are good rather than very good in English, mathematics, modern languages physical education and music. The range of teaching strategies and use of assessment to shape lessons and guide pupils' progress are sound or good in these subjects when they are typically very strong elsewhere in the school. The leadership of these subjects is generally good but not quite as effective as in most other subjects in the school.

### **Sixth form**

29. Teaching and learning are very good. The quality of both is satisfactory or better in virtually all lessons and in 80 per cent it is at least good. It is nearly always the case that lessons benefit from very strong specialist knowledge and great skill in communicating clearly to students. Many students find this a source of real confidence and at times inspiration in their learning.

30. Amongst the subjects given a focus during the inspection, teaching was very good in geography, drama, design and technology, physics English literature and ICT. An equally high quality was evident in some of the other subjects sampled, notably art, religious studies, chemistry and textiles. Amongst the focus subjects, the quality was good rather than very good in French, business education, mathematics, physical education and media studies. In those with very good and occasionally excellent teaching, the crucial features are the variety of strategies used, with the lesson moving at pace from exposition by the teacher to paired or group work, or extensive question and answer sessions involving the whole class. Students are actively involved and required to investigate and pursue questions independently and they realise that their rate of progress depends heavily on themselves. Some of these features are less well developed in other subjects and students can be passive recipients of knowledge for too long, which detracts from otherwise very good teaching in business studies. Students are also more acutely aware of the standards they have reached and need to aim for in some subjects, physics for example, than they are in others, such as mathematics. The constant use of appropriate terminology and challenging levels of vocabulary are another positive feature of most sixth-form teaching, but is less well developed in media studies.
31. The quality of teaching and learning for gifted and talented students in the sixth form is good overall. There are good arrangements for checking progress and setting goals. In subjects where it is particularly good, students are intellectually challenged. In religious education, for example, when questioned, students are able to express their views on the philosophy of religion with unusual clarity. Students are insufficiently challenged in English, ICT and history. In history, students' overall progress is impeded by their lack of reading around the subject.

## **The curriculum**

Provision for the curriculum in Years 7 to 9, 10 and 11 and the sixth form is **very good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- In addition to the traditional curriculum, a good range of vocational courses is included in choices for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- The sixth-form curriculum has been considerably widened to include several vocational courses.
- Extra-curricular activities and enrichment courses are very good.
- More use could be made of ICT within subjects to raise pupils' attainment further.
- Key skills courses in the sixth form do not qualify for accreditation.

## **Commentary**

32. The curriculum is very good throughout the school. It provides a broad and balanced range of subjects for pupils and students in Years 7 to 9, Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form. The curriculum has improved since the previous inspection: several vocational courses are now provided for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and for students in the sixth form. All statutory requirements are now met, and all subjects have an appropriate allocation of time. Pupils with special educational needs are well provided for. A range of out-of-school activities supports pupils who are gifted and talented. The school's development of its status as a technology college has led to a well-established ICT course in Years 7 to 9, and to a considerable increase in the range of vocational subjects. The music department is well equipped to deliver music technology in Years 7 to 9 and at GCSE and A level. Library facilities have improved since the previous inspection, and sixth-form students use the library regularly as a study area. The curriculum for all pupils and students pays appropriate attention to equality of opportunity, is socially inclusive and is very good.
33. In Years 7 to 9, pupils are taught all National Curriculum subjects, religious education and personal and social education. A flexible system of setting by ability in most subjects ensures that pupils learn at an appropriate pace. Drama is taught for one lesson a week, and most

pupils learn two foreign languages. There is good provision for ICT, which is taught as a separate subject, but other subjects do not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to use ICT in order to consolidate their skills.

34. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are able to choose from a wide range of GCSE and vocational courses. In design and technology there are five GCSE subjects, and vocational courses in engineering and manufacturing; in addition to the GCSE course in business studies, the department offers a vocational course in applied business. In anticipation of legislation coming into force shortly, modern languages are now included in the range of options. For lower-attaining pupils, science is offered as a single course, and these pupils follow the ASDAN youth award scheme. A small number of pupils have a single, work-related lesson out of school. Support groups are operated to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of lower-attaining pupils. A small group of pupils in Year 10 is taking GCSE French as an additional foreign language; the department operates this course outside normal hours for one hour per week. As a result of these innovations, the school has noticed increased levels of motivation among pupils and seen a further rise in examination results.
35. The provision for pupils' personal, health and social education is very good and includes consideration of moral and social issues, education about drugs and alcohol abuse, and citizenship. The course is planned with a flexibility that allows discussion of particular issues as they occur. During the inspection, a suggestion that a small amount of anti-social behaviour had taken place led to one class considering the causes and effects of bullying. Pupils in Year 11 learn about parenting skills.
36. The enrichment provided by the extra-curricular activity programme is a strong feature of the school. Despite the geography of the area and the fact that the majority of pupils come to school by bus, the involvement in extra-curricular activities is impressive. A wide range of sporting activities is on offer, catering for all ages. The school has been successful in a number of sporting competitions at district and county level, particularly in the major games of rugby and hockey, which also featured strongly in a tour of Australia in which a large number of senior boys and girls took part. A recreational sporting programme also exists for those who wish purely to participate, and the 'local' game of floorball flourishes for all ages. House competitions are strong in a number of sports and provide opportunities for a large number of pupils.
37. There are also many opportunities for pupils to participate in music and the arts. There is a big uptake of instrumental tuition and choir membership. The musical life of the school makes a strong contribution to the community, with performances by the choir and swing band at various events throughout the year and regular school concerts. School productions are a regular feature, in the form of either musicals or drama presentations. Exhibitions of art also feature strongly both in school and in local galleries. The art club meets regularly and there are 'art days' and artists in residence in school.
38. Many subjects put on visits and trips to local organisations with which good links exist. The local community provides a rich resource for activities, and subjects such as science, design and technology, geography and history are particularly enriched through fieldwork, residentials, visits and other established links. In modern languages, day visits, a European day of languages and a range of other activities help to widen the context for the subject beyond the confines of the curriculum.
39. Provision in the curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is generally good. Where learning support assistants are present, there are good arrangements to support pupils' learning. Individual education plans have targets that are clear and achievable. However, these focus mainly on literacy, and, where appropriate, also include targets for personal and social development. The links between some subjects of the curriculum and special educational needs provision is an area for development. For example, funding limits too

severely the number of lessons in which support is available in mathematics. The needs of the pupils with statements of special educational need are met well, and annual reviews provide a good focus for further improvement.

40. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is good overall. The vast majority of subjects have effectively identified gifted and talented pupils, using the school's criteria, and incorporated activities into their work programmes. Subjects such as science, geography, art and design and technology plan very well, providing activities that stretch pupils. Other subjects, such as English, music and ICT, do not provide sufficient opportunities: for example, no extension work is provided in English. Provision is enhanced by visits, field trips and extra-curricular sport. One student won two gold medals in the Commonwealth Games for sabre, and another reached the world vaulting championships. In geography, in a planned fieldwork assignment, the work of a gifted and talented pupil was outstanding. Pupils wishing to study several languages can supplement timetable lessons with a twilight course in French. The school sends students on residential visits to Kilve Court in Somerset, and helps to organise master classes and 'fast think days'. The school maintains that, as a result, SATs grades have improved.
41. Careers education is good. Pupils and students have planned interviews, and for pupils in Year 11 and students in the sixth form there is good access to the advice service provided by Connexions. Sixth-form students are fully informed about their career choices through the school's very good links with colleges of further and higher education and several universities.
42. The match of staff to the needs of the curriculum is good. The school takes care when appointing staff to maintain high standards of qualifications and experience. These high standards and good match to the curriculum extend through the school in all subjects. Newly qualified teachers receive good support and advice.

### **Sixth form**

43. The school provides very good access to the curriculum in the sixth form, catering for all students in the community. Staffing in the sixth form has a good match of qualifications and experience to the needs of the curriculum. As a result, most pupils continue into the sixth form, and all but a very few complete their courses. The school offers 24 courses at AS and A2 levels, six at advanced vocational level and one at intermediate level. Students may combine these to meet their requirements. Most students study four subjects in Year 12 and three in Year 13. The school's attempts to provide maximum flexibility in order to accommodate students' choices have been very successful. Arrangements have been made with Stratford College to provide a course in German for one student for whom the school was unable to provide. There are opportunities to re-take GCSE examinations in English and mathematics, and there are enrichment courses leading to GCSE qualifications in the Young Enterprise Scheme and to the Sports Leaders' award. Provision for gifted and talented students in the sixth form is good. There is a good range of well-planned activities in and outside lessons to enhance their learning, including visits and field trips. One science student won a place at Salter's Chemistry Club at Birmingham University. Key skills are taught in Years 12 and 13, but the school does not provide accreditation for these courses other than in ICT.

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

The procedures to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are **excellent**. Support, advice and guidance for pupils, based on the monitoring of their achievements and personal development, are **very good**. The extent to which the school seeks to involve pupils in its work and development is **excellent**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good policies for child protection and health and safety are fully implemented.
- Assessment is used well to set targets and provide appropriate support for all pupils.
- Support for pupils with behavioural problems is excellent.
- Advice on exam options and careers, and work-experience arrangements, are very good.
- There are excellent induction arrangements for pupils.
- There is a very effective school council involving all pupils.
- Some lessons provide too little support for pupils with special educational needs.
- Gifted and talented pupils are not consistently provided with enough challenge in lessons.

## Commentary

44. Teachers ensure that pupils work in a healthy and safe environment, and the school is very conscientious in dealing with matters of child protection. The system of pastoral care is very effective in ensuring that all pupils have a trusting relationship with an adult in the school. Pupils are taught about the dangers posed by the Internet. The school works very well with a range of external support agencies.
45. Pupils' academic achievements and personal development are monitored well, enabling very good provision of support, advice and guidance to pupils. Any problems relating to attendance or behaviour are identified and acted on quickly, involving parents when appropriate. Data is collected from primary schools and achievement tracked throughout a pupil's school career. Pupils' attitudes and the amount of effort they put into their work are regularly reported. Targets are set in most subjects, and pupils say they are given helpful information so that they know how to improve.
46. Pupils are given good, impartial advice on which to base their option choices for GCSE. This links well to work-experience placements in Year 10 and to the study and employment options after Year 11. The limited time available from the Connexions careers advisor is used well.
47. Induction arrangements are excellent. Pupils joining the school in Year 7 settle in quickly, and arrangements to support pupils with English as an additional language are excellent, with support from within the school and the local education authority.
48. Pupils are fully involved in the work of the school and in its development through a very effective school council. The agenda for the meeting is fully discussed in tutor groups beforehand, so that council members represent their peers' views and feed back council decisions immediately afterwards. This enables full consultation between school and pupils in such matters as the development of school facilities, which charities to support and, during the inspection, whether a new standard design of skirt should be adopted for the girls.
49. Since the last inspection the school has continued to work hard to improve the standards of care and monitoring for pupils.

## Sixth form

50. The support, advice and guidance available in the sixth form are **very good**. Students' views are valued and they have an **excellent** involvement in the life of the school.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Monitoring of students' progress and achievements is comprehensive and informs very good career advice.
- There are very good induction arrangements for students.
- Students are fully involved in the school council and hold their own council.

## Commentary

51. Students feel that the advice they received about study options after Year 11 was very good, with one-to-one discussions with teachers, so that life in the sixth form is a positive experience for all. Students who join from other schools are equally appreciative.
52. Students are very clear about their academic performance, and are given good guidance on how to improve to meet their targets. Careers advice is very good, and students value the weekly sessions highly. Outside visitors are used well: for example, during the inspection a representative from Oxford Brookes University gave clear and impartial advice on managing student finances. Students are encouraged to make 'fall-back' arrangements and to plan their futures in such a way as to keep their options open when they are undecided about a career path.
53. Students' involvement in the life of the school is excellent. All students are involved in an extra-curricular community service programme, often helping in school with younger pupils by, for example, completing a Sports Leader Award. They play a full part in school development through the school councils, and involve pupils in charitable fund-raising.

## Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The effectiveness of the school's links with parents is **excellent**. The quality of links with the local community is **very good**. Extended educational programmes for the community are **very good**. The school's links with other schools and colleges are **very good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very strong parental support for all aspects of the school's work.
- Parents encourage their children's full involvement in extra-curricular activities.
- The school consults and involves parents in its work and provides very good information.
- Excellent links with primary schools aids pupils' transfer to secondary school.
- The school works closely with the local community.
- There is a very good provision of extended services to parents, primary school children and the community.

## Commentary

54. An excellent partnerships has been established with parents, who express very strong support for the school's work and are kept well informed about school activities and their children's progress. Annual and interim reports provide comments on attitudes and personal development, and set clear targets to raise academic achievement. Parents provide practical support through the PTA, help in finding work-experience placements and support pupils' extra-curricular activities with transport and attendance at performances.
55. Very good links have been established with the local community through use of the school's premises. The sports centre, under an agreement with the local council, is available for public use. Local music and history societies use school premises regularly for meetings and performances. The sixth form holds an annual debate with the local debating society. Some very good links have been established with businesses to raise achievement, especially in science, history and business studies.
56. The school provides extended services to the community by supporting learning in several subjects and through the school's provision of educational programmes. Classes in ICT for local people are held twice a week. Pupils from several of the feeder primary school use the swimming pool, and some pupils in Years 5 and 6 benefit from very good teaching and

- specialist facilities in the gym. The school's behaviour support teacher provides excellent support for individual and groups of parents whose children have given cause for concern.
57. Liaison with primary schools enables all pupils to settle quickly into secondary school: there are very good links in many subject areas, and pastoral transfer is very effective. There are several good links with other secondary schools, notably in design and technology for work-based education in Year 11. Joint master classes are provided for pupils identified as gifted and talented.
58. Parents and the community continue to provide strong support for the school and, since the last inspection, the school has developed programmes that contribute to the community.

### **Sixth form**

59. Links with the community and other schools and colleges are **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good use is made of visits and visitors to enrich students' experiences.
- There are very good links with other schools and colleges to meet specific needs.
- All students contribute to the school and local communities.

### **Commentary**

60. The head of sixth form has developed very good links with businesses and the local community, as well as with higher education establishments. Visits to establishments and visitors to school promote learning in a number of subjects (especially design and technology, business and history). Careers education is enhanced by visiting speakers, who assist students in making choices for their future. Students have been enabled to study a unique curriculum through liaison with other sixth forms to provide teaching in subjects not on offer at this school.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The overall quality of leadership and management in the school is **very good**. Leadership by the headteacher is **excellent** and management arrangements are **very effective**. The governance of the school is **highly effective**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher gives the school's work an excellent sense of direction and purpose.
- Senior managers work together most effectively.
- Heads of year and of subjects give very good overall leadership and management, and in science art and design and technology the quality of both is excellent.
- Governors are extremely well informed about the school and play a very significant role in shaping its plans and helping to implement them.
- Financial and administrative management is excellent.
- Planning for improvement is very effective.
- Leadership and management in English, citizenship, mathematics and music are good, whereas in most subjects the quality is very good.

### **Commentary**

61. The very strong ethos of the school and its sustained success owe a great deal to the excellent leadership of the headteacher. He provides very clear educational vision and direction, formulates excellent policies to implement his aims and demonstrates by example his intense commitment to pupils and their progress. There is also the best possible balance



between his support for colleagues and his holding them to close account for the areas in which they operate.

62. Delegation to colleagues is very successful. Senior management staff are given extensive responsibilities and expected to take the initiative in carrying them out. Links with the headteacher and the other senior staff remain close through regular meetings and very good day-to-day communication. As a result, teamwork at this level is extremely effective. It has allowed one member of the team, for example to construct a very successful bid for technology college status and then develop his training skills in helping other schools produce bids. Another deputy took over the leadership and management of the gifted and talented programme on a temporary basis when extremely new to the school. He has acted swiftly to co-ordinate the programme, plug any gaps in provision, reassess departmental involvement and draw up an improved, formal policy and a new system for monitoring the progress of these pupils across subjects.
63. All documents and statements by senior managers place great significance on the work of heads of year and heads of subjects, matched by the extensive programme of support, monitoring, discussion and professional development opportunities guiding their work. In consequence, there is a very good general level of competency across middle management, with several areas of excellence. In the art, science and design and technology departments, leadership and management are of the highest quality. All the systems for ensuring the collective pursuit of high standards are present: imaginative teaching approaches, good course choices, clear schemes of work and strategies for encouraging and challenging all types of pupils. The special educational needs co-ordinator gives very good leadership to this area, and she manages the provision well. She has very good knowledge of this aspect of the school, and how to develop provision in the future. There are good arrangements for liaison with primary schools, and the co-ordinator visits them in the summer term to arrange a smooth transition for pupils on the special needs registers. The school fully meets the requirements of the code of practice for special educational needs. There is a designated governor, who has a good involvement in the work of the school. Funds allocated to pupils with special educational needs are used to good effect.
64. The school responded very positively to the recommendations in the previous report and in many other ways has shown it can bring about necessary change. All those with leadership and management roles have contributed to marked improvements in recent years on what was already a good school with many very good features. Success lies in the accurate analysis of needs, the very realistic strategies used for change and above all the consistent monitoring by managers to check that progress is on track. "Self –evaluation" by the school is of a very high order, being detailed, searching and practical in its assessment of ways to improve. Equally there is far more monitoring and support of the school's work than simply required by statute through "Performance Management" for example: as a result managers have information about school practice which is reliable and extensive.
65. The school has given considerable attention to ensuring that the recruitment and retention of teachers is good. There are very good systems in place for staff development and training, linked very successfully to development plans. All staff are fully informed about this process. Any in-service training for teachers is focused directly towards school improvement as well as the teacher's own professional development.
66. The day-to-day work of the school is observed directly and much appreciated by many individual governors, and the governing body as a whole has a very good knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses, through such direct means as well as through reports and other documentation. Governors are able and willing to question senior managers constructively over policies and plans and collaborate very well with them in many areas, especially the capital projects which have recently been so efficiently completed. Governors monitor financial matters most carefully and liaise regularly with the school's excellent bursar. They are involved at an early stage in shaping the school's development plans. As a result, the governors give very high-quality strategic support and guidance to the school. With the

senior management team they ensure that “best value” options are consistently chosen. They meet virtually all their statutory obligations, though not those concerning the daily Act of Worship.

67. Parents note that initial contacts with the school are pleasantly and speedily dealt with. Inspectors confirm that this is also their judgement and that it extends to the wider day-to-day administrative efficiency of the school, which is very good indeed and contributes very significantly to the effectiveness of overall management.
68. In a minority of subjects, leadership and management has been or is currently good rather than very good. The differences are historic in the case of English, where new leadership is rapidly establishing better practice on many fronts, while in mathematics and music, while many aspects are very well managed, there is a need for new and additional strategies to raise achievement to the higher levels seen elsewhere in the school.

### **Sixth form**

69. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very effective. The relatively new head of sixth form and her deputy work well together and have added to the work of predecessors. With support from the senior management team, they have initiated several beneficial changes. All assessing of students’ initial interests and aptitudes is most systematically carried out and students are now very well matched to courses and report that they are very pleased with their choices. As a result, very few leave before completing their course. The monitoring of their progress and the frequency of reviews with tutors is far more effective than usual. Decisions taken by the head of sixth form to complete the process of broadening the curriculum have proved wise ones and the newly introduced subjects are leading to good achievement by students, without prejudicing attainment in established subjects. The former, variable use of private study time by students has been tackled and the newly appointed sixth-form administrator is already part of a support and monitoring process responsible for establishing a good ethos in the sixth form. Collectively, these actions have led to noticeable improvements in the rates of progress students make in lessons and standards they are reaching. Students themselves are now very well informed about their current standards, how to improve and what targets to aim for.

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,516,666
Total expenditure	3,419,200
Expenditure per pupil	3,061

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	243,836
Balance carried forward to the next	97,487

# **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 **good**.

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

- Standards are well above average and pupils achieve well.
- Teaching and learning are good; pupils are interested in their work.
- Drama is a valuable addition to the curriculum in all years.
- Literacy skills are systematically developed in other subject areas.
- New leadership is introducing good management systems.
- Boys' attainment is not as good as that of girls.
- Planning does not sufficiently take into account the needs of the highest- and lowest-attaining pupils.
- Assessment criteria are not used sufficiently to plan lessons and motivate pupils.

#### **Commentary**

70. Results of the national tests for pupils in Year 9 are well above average. In 2002, they were well above average, taking into account pupils' prior attainment. Results are improving and this trend continued in 2003.
71. Standards of work seen in Year 9 during the inspection were well above average. Pupils achieve well, relative to their attainment on entry. They are fluent and confident readers. Writing shows a good awareness of audience and purpose, and pupils employ an appropriate vocabulary. They make good use of imagery in descriptive writing. All but the lowest-attaining pupils use paragraphs effectively, punctuate accurately and spell reasonably well. Girls' standards are higher than those of boys.
72. Results in the GCSE examinations are well above average. In 2002, they were above average compared to pupils' prior attainment. Results are improving and continued to do so in 2003. Boys perform considerably less well than girls, and the gap is larger than that found nationally. Pupils did less well in English than in their other subjects in 2002, especially in terms of achieving A and A\* grades.
73. Standards of Year 11 work seen during the inspection were well above average. Pupils continue to make good improvement and achieve well in all attainment areas. Higher-attaining pupils express perceptive opinions confidently, making good use of the text to support their arguments. They do not, however, have an extensive knowledge of a range of literature and theatre. Creative writing shows flair and enthusiasm. Average-attaining pupils write fluently and show awareness of literary techniques, such as Priestley's methods of characterisation in *An Inspector Calls*. They construct narrative thoughtfully when supported by the teacher. Lower-attaining pupils lack confidence, but understand layers of meaning in their reading and express themselves reasonably when sure of what they are saying. Their written work is untidy and technically flawed. Girls do better than boys.

74. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. They receive good support, with class teachers and support teachers working well together. Pupils do not always have the benefit of resources directed specifically to their needs. Gifted and talented pupils make satisfactory progress. Though these pupils are identified, there is not enough provision for their needs.
75. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge. They ask challenging questions, so that pupils deepen their understanding. A range of interesting methods is used, including group and paired work and drama, ensuring that interest is maintained and pupils are involved in their learning. For example, pupils in Year 7 effectively learnt the importance of capturing important detail in their note-taking by discovering a 'bomb' in the classroom. Year 10 came to understand the character and reactions of the Birling family through enactment. ICT is not used enough to enhance learning. On occasion, the lesson moves too slowly to maintain the enthusiasm of the higher-attaining pupils, and lesson content does not sufficiently challenge the gifted and talented pupils. Teachers do not make assessment criteria clear enough to pupils, so they are not sure exactly how to improve.
76. Leadership and management are good. The recently appointed leadership is introducing effective systems of monitoring, assessment and planning, which are ensuring a more consistent approach within the department. It is now developing into a cohesive, efficient unit. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good, but there is still work to be done to develop the subject to its full potential.

### **Drama**

77. All pupils have the opportunity to study drama throughout the school, and it is a popular option in Years 10 and 11. Standards are above average in Year 9 and Year 11. Teaching and learning are very good, and pupils enjoy the subject tremendously. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and lively delivery, choosing interesting topics as stimuli. Pupils co-operate very well in their groups, discussing productively and developing creative responses that make effective use of dramatic techniques. They systematically develop the ability to criticise their own and others' dramas, in order to improve them. Leadership and management are good, and schemes of work and assessment systems are now being developed in greater detail.

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

78. Standards of literacy are well above average. Pupils read fluently, speak effectively and write well for a variety of purposes. Standards are above average on entry, and improve steadily as pupils move through the school. This is because most subject areas contribute well to the development of language and literacy, and strategies are very well co-ordinated and effectively monitored.
79. Pupils are given opportunities to respond orally, and are encouraged to explore their ideas through discussion. Pupils in a Year 11 drama class, for example, effectively developed their understanding of the feelings of anorexia sufferers through discussion and improvisation. Teachers give good advice on how to structure writing, and use creative as well as factual responses to extend understanding. A Year 8 class, for example, wrote imaginative weather poems to link with National Poetry Day. The school has a useful policy for marking, which underlines the importance to pupils of accurate expression and encourages a consistent approach in all subjects. Most subject areas introduce important new words carefully. The library is somewhat small and under-used, but pupils receive a good introduction to it when they enter the school.

## Modern languages

Pupils study French from Years 7 to 9, and most take German as a second foreign language in Years 8 and 9. Most opt to continue with German in Years 10 and 11. A small number take both these languages. A minority of lower attainers take Spanish only from Year 8 and can continue with it to Year 11. Spanish was not seen during the inspection.

Provision for modern foreign languages is **very good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

### *Strengths*

- GCSE results were above average in 2002 and the provisional results were better still in 2003.
- The gap between boys and girls' performances is narrower than is the case nationally. Teaching is good overall and often very good; pupils achieve very well by Year 11. The range of enrichment language activities is extensive.

### *Weaknesses*

- Pupils do not redraft or always do corrections of their carefully marked work.

## Commentary

80. GCSE results in French were above average in 2002 and improved further in 2003. Results in German were well above average in 2002 and the provisional results for 2003 are of similar quality, which represents very good achievement. Spanish results were below average, but the lower-attaining candidates in both years achieved very well to gain the grades they did.
81. Standards in French in the current Year 9 are above average overall. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve well. All pupils develop their writing skills effectively. The higher attainers are able to write in the past and future tense very well, and can recognise these tenses readily in their reading activities. Middle and lower attainers write within a more limited range of topics, but they mostly take great care to write accurately. As a pilot school for the Key Stage 3 Strategy for languages, the department has benefited greatly from recent in-service training. Pupils, particularly boys, are reported by teachers to be working with increased interest and concentration, and have developed their reading and speaking skills more effectively than in previous years. Standards in German are good, given the time pupils have studied the language.
82. Standards in the current Year 11 are above average. Pupils achieve very well because of very positive attitudes and because teachers are very familiar with the demands of the examination course. Pupils' rapid progress since the beginning of term suggests that they are on course to reach very high standards by the end of the year. Most write very effectively; many manipulate tenses well and draw fully on the phrases they have met already to express their own views. Some of the most talented even use flair and humour in their detailed accounts of, for example, their holidays. Pupils respond well in short conversations about themselves and most are willing to try. Reading and listening skills develop well through constant practice and close monitoring.
83. Teaching is good overall; it is often very good and even excellent. Pupils learn consistently well. The scrutiny of written work shows evidence of very good teaching by temporarily absent teachers. Strong features of most lessons are the very good use of the foreign language, careful planning to cover all the skills and very effective management of pupils' behaviour. Teachers have carefully generated positive attitudes to the subject by encouraging all, and especially boys, to participate in all speaking activities, fun language games and competitive challenges. As a result, nearly all listen and concentrate very carefully in lessons. Teachers use a wide variety of resources, including frequent use of overhead projectors and computers.

84. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The team works very effectively together, despite many recent staff changes, and takes on new initiatives wholeheartedly. The range of language activities and visits abroad is extensive and high numbers of pupils take part. The department has improved well since the previous inspection.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The standards attained by pupils in public examinations are well above the national average, and show a rate of improvement that is also well above the national average.
- The pupils learn well because of good teaching and because of their very good behaviour.
- There has been good improvement since the last inspection.
- Some lessons do not involve pupils or arouse their interest sufficiently.
- Teachers are not yet making enough use of the new computer equipment.

### **Commentary**

85. Pupils' results in 2002 were well above average both in the Year 9 National Curriculum tests (SATs) and in GCSE at Year 11. SAT results have shown an upward trend in recent years, in line with those nationally. The 2003 test scores are higher than those for 2002, reflecting the resolution of some outstanding staffing problems. Girls perform rather better than boys, but not markedly so. GCSE results fluctuate somewhat from year to year, but have always been above, and usually well above, the national average. There is little difference between the performance of girls and boys. Given that the pupils come to the school with average mathematical skills, these results show that the pupils are achieving well. Compared with previous test scores, GCSE and test results show improvement at well above the national rate.
86. Pupils' work, seen in their books and during lessons, was well above average, and showed good achievement over time, as might be expected from the national test and examination results. In Year 9 about half of the pupils are already approaching level 6 and can solve linear equations algebraically and graphically; even those who find mathematics difficult are beginning to solve equations by trial and improvement. In Years 10 and 11 higher-attaining pupils master solution of quadratic equations by completing the square, and work in statistics is universally very good. All pupils seen were clearly capable of gaining a GCSE grade, with most capable of a grade E or better, and more than three in five in line for a grade C or above.
87. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress. The level of help available from learning support assistants varies from one teaching group to another, but contributes strongly to progress where it occurs. Teachers are aware of which pupils need extra assistance, and they know their pupils well, so that even when no extra support is available they enable them to achieve well. An example was a Year 7 lesson on finding the area of parallelograms and other shapes: a pupil had recently returned from a lengthy period in Germany and needed extra attention to his language skills. No pupils with English as an additional language were seen during the inspection.
88. Gifted and talented mathematicians make satisfactory progress. They benefit from setting arrangements, and they are entered for the national mathematics challenge competitions, which they find interesting and in which they perform well. Those in Years 7 to 9 are given one whole day per year off timetable, which is very effectively and creatively employed. Year 7 pupils spend the day researching codes and code breaking. This is followed up in Year 8 with a visit to Bletchley Park. In few lessons, however, is there added challenge beyond the inclusion of extra examples or extension of the work at hand. As yet, the recently introduced

computer equipment – each classroom has its own computer which is linked to the Internet – is not being effectively used to challenge gifted and talented pupils.

89. Teaching is good across the school. In almost every lesson, good teaching gave rise to secure gains in knowledge and understanding on the part of the pupils. There were few lessons, however, in which teaching was very good, and none in which it was excellent. The teachers are well qualified and know their subject well. Lessons are thoroughly prepared and delivered at a good pace, so that pupils' interest is maintained and they work productively throughout, whether individually or in groups. Teachers mark pupils' work carefully and fully, so that pupils can see what they need to do to improve. Standards of presentation and of behaviour are high, because teachers insist that they remain so. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good and make a significant contribution to the quality of learning. The hallmark of the lessons is, therefore, that they are effective and efficient. Some are exciting too, but most are too reliant on a didactic approach to engross and inspire the pupils. In this respect, the contribution made by ICT, whilst much better than at the last inspection, is still less than it should be. This is mostly because much of the equipment is new and teachers are still deciding how best to employ it. This is the case with the two interactive whiteboards, which are sometimes used very well: for example, in a lesson on conversions between metric and imperial measures, prepared slides and tables added to the pace, and reference to the current rates of exchange using the Financial Times site on the Internet added to the sense of reality. The challenge for the department is to raise the quality of good and workmanlike lessons to that of the best lessons.
90. Links with partner primary schools are very good. Teachers from Chipping Campden School provide exemplar work and help to teach small groups, which is valued and very useful. Some training to other secondary teachers has also been offered. The head of department also provides tuition for adults at evening classes, enabling them to improve their skills, both for examinations and for practical purposes.
91. The leadership and management of mathematics are good. Very good test and examination data is used well to set individual targets for pupils. This data is not yet, however, fully employed in setting global targets class by class for teachers to aim at. Teachers are observed teaching, and these observations are used to set targets for improvement that are effective in helping to raise standards. The head of department, herself a very good teacher, provides a very good role model for both staff and pupils.
92. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. All issues referred to have been successfully addressed and resolved, and levels of attainment have risen.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

93. Pupils demonstrate mathematical and numerical skills that are above the national norm across the range of subjects they study, so they have good access to new understanding based on number skill. In design and technology, classroom skills are good. The use of measurement and graph work contributes to high standards, and pupils process data, such as questionnaire results, on computers. In geography, there are good examples of graphical work and the interpretation of statistical analysis in fieldwork. In science, the work seen in books and in lessons confirms a very good level of mathematical competence.
94. A sound contribution to improving pupils' numerical understanding is made in most areas of the curriculum. There is a draft whole-school numeracy policy awaiting the ratification of governors. Some, but by no means all, departments implement their own policies and have identified opportunities for developing numerical skills. This leads to variable practice. In ICT, pupils are encouraged to use formulae in spreadsheets very effectively and logo is well taught and understood. In science, there is a very good policy in the departmental handbook, and teachers show a good level of awareness of the changes in mathematics teaching. A good example was seen of a teacher referring to the different sorts of average – mean, mode and

median – in the context of experimental results. In other subjects, such as English, drama, citizenship and art, there is little or no evidence of any policy or contribution.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **excellent**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good achievement is resulting in standards that are consistently well above the national averages.
- Very good, imaginative and adventurous teaching is leading to very good learning and highly motivated pupils.
- Excellent leadership and management are ensuring that all aspects of work are efficiently organised and that an excellent ethos pervades the department.
- The varied curriculum in Years 10 and 11 provides appropriate learning opportunities for all types of pupil.
- Very good technical support is providing pupils with extensive experience of high quality practical and experimental science.
- Although specialist accommodation is satisfactory overall, some of the laboratories are in need of refurbishment.
- Lack of access to ICT equipment is limiting the use of this valuable addition to learning opportunities.

### Commentary

95. In 2002, results in the national tests taken by Year 9 pupils were well above the national averages. They were above the standards achieved by pupils who were at a similar standard in Year 6, but below those of pupils from similar schools. The slightly better performance of girls compared to boys was similar to that evident nationally. Over recent years, results have been consistently at this level. In 2003, results were significantly better. Ninety per cent of pupils achieved the standard expected of pupils at this age, and 65 per cent gained the higher grades, compared to the national average of 40 per cent. Evidence gathered during the inspection, including observation of lessons and examination of pupils' notebooks and their performances on tests, indicate that the present standards match those of last year. High standards were exemplified by the ease and confidence with which Year 8 pupils used the periodic table of elements.
96. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2002 were well above both the national averages and the average for similar schools. When the results are compared to the same pupils' performance in Year 9, they are in the highest category of improvement. Boys' results were slightly below those of girls, but the difference was half that seen nationally. Results in 2003 matched those of 2002 and maintained the steady improvement evident over recent years. The outstanding feature of this very good attainment is the number of highest grades achieved. In both 2002 and 2003, 25 per cent of pupils gained an A\* or A grade, compared to the national figure for 2002 of 10 per cent.
97. Pupils enter the school with standards that are just above the national average. The improvement during Years 7 to 9 shows very good achievement, which is shared by all pupils. The highest- and lowest-attaining pupils constantly work at levels that test their capabilities to the full, and they make rapid progress. Very good achievement ensures that these very high standards are maintained through to GCSE. In addition to the high proportion of top grades, pupils do better in science than in their other subjects, including mathematics and English.



98. Teaching and learning are very good. Of the lessons observed, nearly three quarters were very good or excellent, and none was unsatisfactory. Planning is imaginative and adventurous, and the degree of difficulty is always well judged. Teachers have very high expectations of all their pupils. Excellent management of classes is founded on relationships that show mutual respect and affection. Pupils respond to the obvious care shown to them by working hard, showing a lot of enthusiasm and trusting their teachers. A Year 8 class was fascinated by being asked to model the molecules of air and then being presented with an experimental 'puzzle' that enabled them to acquire a secure understanding of the differences between mixtures and compounds. Watching a pig's heart being dissected via closed circuit television; being trusted to organise food tests independently; having to work out how to test the strength of their own manufactured piece of concrete: all of these activities produced lessons in which pupils' enthusiasm was obvious and they were clearly learning effectively. A top set in Year 11 quickly gained a good understanding of exothermic and endothermic reactions, because they were presented with a carefully designed problem requiring them to model the reactions and work out the underlying concepts for themselves.
99. Excellent leadership and management are evident in all aspects of the department's work, including:
- The assessment of pupils' attainment and progress. Marking, the use of targets to motivate pupils and give guidance on how to improve, and the use of data to monitor teaching are all very effective.
  - The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 is varied and provides very well for pupils of different levels of attainment and interests.
  - Despite problems imposed by limited access to ICT equipment, competent and enthusiastic teachers are using computers as much as possible to enrich the science curriculum.
  - There are organised and effective responses to the whole-school policies for numeracy, literacy and citizenship.
  - The quality of teaching is carefully monitored. The attention to professional development of teachers and the support for inexperienced colleagues are exemplary.
  - Morale is very high. Teachers and technicians work together as a mutually supportive team, sharing fully the commitment to achieving the best possible science education for pupils.
100. Two laboratories are in urgent need of modernisation and one is too small for normal-sized classes. The number of computers and associated specialist equipment available for use within laboratories are limited. These factors are restricting the learning opportunities for some pupils.
101. Since the last inspection there has been very good improvement: every criticism made in the report has been successfully addressed.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

- The standards attained by pupils at the end of Years 9 and 11 are well above national averages.
- The teaching of ICT is mostly very good.
- The resources for learning are good.
- Technical support is very good.
- There is very good leadership of the ICT department.
- Cross-curricular ICT is in need of further development.
- Some of the ICT resources outside of the ICT department are not used efficiently.

## Commentary

102. In the 2003 teacher assessments, pupils in Year 9 gained grades that were well above national averages. Figures for the previous three years also show very high attainment. When pupils enter the school, they demonstrate broadly average competence, using a narrow range of applications. At the end of Year 9, their attainment is very good. This is evidence of the very good achievement of all pupils, including those with special educational needs. Pupils are very confident users of ICT who enjoy working with computers. They demonstrate very good skills when they communicate information, for example in the presentations they created to persuade others to visit a holiday destination. They produced a wide range of posters and brochures that showed a very good awareness of their audience. Pupils often plan their work in advance, using paper and pencil to explore ideas. They were very confident when working to provide solutions for problems using database and spreadsheet software. They wrote complex procedures to develop geometric patterns on the computer screen. They gain a very good knowledge of ways in which ICT can be used in industry in their design and technology courses.
103. Year 11 pupils entered for the GCSE ICT examination attain results that were well above national averages. This has been the picture for a number of years. About a fifth of all Year 11 pupils were entered for the 2003 examination. Pupils who are not taking the GCSE follow a course in ICT that provides, with some input from other subjects, basic coverage of the National Curriculum requirements. This course is not accredited and so pupils' efforts are not rewarded by certification. The numbers of pupils in these ICT classes are too large, and pupils often have to share computers. The time allocated to this course is less than national recommendations. As a consequence of these factors, achievement is barely satisfactory.
104. In the GCSE course, the present Year 11 pupils are attaining standards that are well above average. In their course work, they produce very good analysis of problems and very well developed solutions. Their commentary on their work and their evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the systems they develop are of a very high overall standard. Their grasp of the areas of knowledge and understanding that make up the curriculum is very good, as is their use of relevant terminology. Their course work is very well presented.
105. Teaching is generally very good and provides the basis for very good learning. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and effectively transfer this to pupils through the high quality support and guidance they give them. Support is very well judged, and often throws back on to pupils the responsibility for finding things out, while gently nudging them towards ways in which they can do so. Planning and schemes of work are of a very high standard and provide very good challenge. There is good use of the interactive whiteboard and data projectors in ICT lessons: this promotes very good learning, through improved communication of lesson objectives and demonstrations that can be viewed by all, and by providing very good exemplification of the power of ICT to communicate. Lessons have very good pace and variety and stimulate learning through engaging pupils' interest, and pupils are given plenty of time for practical work. Achievement is very good.
106. The leadership of the department is very good. The department is led by a very experienced and capable teacher who leads by example. His teaching is very good and he has a very clear idea of what has to be done to improve standards further. As a result of the department's monitoring programme, he has a very good overview of the strengths and weaknesses of ICT teaching and learning. His management of the dedicated ICT courses is very good, and he has made some very important contributions to cross-curricular ICT, through audits of provision in other subjects, support and guidance on assessment of cross-curricular ICT and regular training for teachers of other subjects. Despite these efforts, the delivery of cross-curricular ICT is patchy, both across and within subjects. There are strengths in a number of subjects, including science, design and technology and art, but other subjects could do a lot more to utilise the potential of ICT to improve learning. There is no comprehensive school-

wide scheme of work to guide cross-curricular development of ICT, and some resources are not fully exploited, notably the computers that have been installed in all classrooms. While these are recent additions, their under-use remains striking.

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

107. The use of ICT across the curriculum varies from subject to subject and teacher to teacher. The ICT department prepares pupils very well to use the major software applications, and the skills pupils acquire are well utilised in a number of subjects, notably science, design and technology, music, geography and modern languages. However a number of subjects and teachers within subjects are making little use of ICT as a tool for learning. No use is made of more flexible ways of meeting needs, such as laptop computers with wireless connection to the network. The ICT department offers regular staff training and almost all teachers have had relevant ICT training.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **very good**.

- Standards are very good and pupils achieve very well.
- Teaching and learning are of very good quality.
- Lessons are stimulating and pupils learn quickly as a result.
- Teachers plan well for pupils' differing needs.
- The very good use of fieldwork has improved pupils' practical and analytical skills.
- Assessment and marking are used successfully to improve pupils' work.
- Very good leadership and management of the department have led to a significant improvement in standards.

### **Commentary**

108. Standards in the current Year 9 are well above average, and all pupils achieve very well from their starting point, including those who are gifted in geography and those with special educational needs. These standards are reflected in the teacher-assessed tests. On entry to the school, standards are broadly average. Some pupils lack basic geographical skills and some have writing difficulties. In Year 7, they soon acquire a degree of independence, quickly learning basic skills and the principles of enquiry. Teachers use pupils' knowledge of the local area well, improving it through enjoyable fieldwork. By Year 9, pupils have acquired very good skills, well developed through fieldwork in every year. Everyone follows a structured enquiry well. Pupils use geographical terms accurately and write well for different purposes, the result of the strong emphasis placed on literacy. Year 8 pupils wrote sensitive and amusing poems about the weather. The majority of pupils show good understanding of pattern and trends. Higher-attaining pupils wrote well at length about population distribution and interpreted information about stages in population growth very well. Others wrote in less detail but, with support, expressed themselves clearly.
109. Since the last inspection, GCSE examination results have improved tremendously, rising from above average to well above average. The improvement in results is due to successful planning, committed teaching and good use of assessment. In 2002, the results were the best in the county, and pupils did better in geography than in their other subjects. There was little difference between girls' and boys' results at higher grades. This year's results were outstanding. All pupils achieved A\* to C grades, and more than a third achieved A\* and A grades. This represented very good achievement for all and individual results amongst the best five in the country were commended by the examination board. Geography is a popular subject, and rising numbers of pupils are taking it as an examination subject.

110. By the end of Year 11, standards are well above average and pupils achieve very well. Teachers build effectively on earlier work, so that pupils improve their skills and understanding of concepts. The majority remember their work well. Literacy and numeracy are strongly emphasised throughout, resulting in high standards of written work and good numerical skills that support practical work. Pupils show very good understanding of patterns and processes and apply this well, for example in work about land use patterns in Gloucester and in river investigations. Their very good skills are well developed through high-quality fieldwork. Fieldwork at Ashes Hollow enabled pupils to apply theoretical knowledge in a practical situation, improved their analytical skills and widened their opportunities for statistical testing. Work by one gifted and talented pupil was outstanding. Higher-attaining pupils linked their practical work well to river processes and were aware of the limitations of their methods. Average-attaining pupils were less evaluative in their conclusions, as were lower-attaining pupils, who nevertheless wrote sound comments about their methods and results.
111. The quality of teaching is very good overall, resulting in high quality learning. Teachers plan, organise and teach difficult ideas well, so that pupils learn very quickly in stimulating and challenging lessons. Well-produced resources that are relevant and interesting meet different needs well. Pupils are very motivated and come to lessons prepared to learn. Rigorous assessment and marking help pupils to improve their work. Relative weaknesses are that the library is not used enough for research, and insufficient time is spent on plenary sessions (to take stock and recognise pupils' achievement) and on encouraging pupils to express their opinions more fully through discussion. When they had the opportunity, in a lesson entitled 'Ready, Steady, Manage!', pupils worked collaboratively as planning teams, refining their ideas and explaining the rationale for their coastal protection plans well.
112. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department leads by example and a committed and very experienced teamwork very well together. Improvement since the last inspection is excellent.

## **History**

Provision in history is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Attainment at Year 9 and Year 11, in tests, examinations and work seen, is very high, and far above national expectations.
- Pupils make very good progress and there is high achievement.
- The teaching of history is very good, with some excellent features. This leads to very good learning.
- History is very well led and managed by the recently appointed head of department.
- There is appropriate emphasis on literacy in all lessons.
- Positive relationships encourage and support learning.
- In-class assessment of learning is not yet sufficiently embedded.
- Pupils do not have sufficient access to ICT to enhance their learning.
- Pupils do not have textbooks to take home to help them review their work or research and prepare for the next lesson.
- Gifted and talented pupils are not always fully challenged.

### **Commentary**

113. Standards of attainment of pupils at entry to the school are above average. At Year 9, standards in teacher-assessed tests are very high in relation to national levels. Observation of lessons and analysis of pupils' work confirm that attainment in class work is also far above national expectations. The average-attaining pupils develop a wide range of subject skills,

including interpreting evidence, prioritising historical issues and understanding chronology. Higher-attaining pupils use their knowledge and understanding to identify, evaluate and use sources of information and to analyse relationships between features of a particular period. For example, in their studies of the slave trade, Year 9 pupils critically examined video clips from the movie *Roots* to determine that black slaves were exploited by both black and white slave traders, who were equally driven by the motives of profit and greed.

114. At GCSE, pupils' attainment is very high in relation to national averages. Pupils develop their analytical skills effectively and the higher-attaining pupils demonstrate a high degree of empathy and sophistication in their interpretation of historical events. For example, Year 11 pupils studying the development of the freedom movement in South Africa in the 1960s interpreted Albert Luthuli's poignant comment, 'we were knocking modestly and moderately at a closed and barred door', not only as a summary of the peaceful protests but also, in the aftermath of the Sharpeville massacre, as an expression of frustration at their ineffectual outcome, and a foreboding of events to come.
115. Pupils of all levels of attainment make very good progress and achieve very well in Years 7 to 11. Pupils with learning difficulties make very good progress, in line with other pupils, because their teachers know them well, use good differentiated materials, and provide effective guidance in lessons. However, gifted and talented pupils are not always fully challenged. Despite the very high levels of achievement, progress is hampered by the lack of textbooks, which means that pupils are not able to take home books in order to review their work and research and prepare for their next lesson.
116. Teaching is very good overall, and was excellent in one lesson. A similarly strong profile of teaching applies to all years. Teachers know their subject very well. They have an obvious love for it, and this commitment is strongly communicated to pupils, providing a firm basis for learning. Lessons are well planned and teachers use a wide range of methods that support learning well. There is appropriate emphasis on literacy, and high profiles are set for reading and for the use of correct technical language. Homework is set regularly and marking is well focused, supporting progress, learning and achievement. The lack of interactive white boards in the classrooms and limited access to ICT hamper the use of additional teaching methods and strategies to enhance independent learning. Learning is very good. Very good relationships underpin learning: in all years, pupils listen intently to each other and work well together. Pupils behave very well, with high levels of concentration and focus.
117. Leadership and management are very good. The very recently appointed head of department has built on the work of her predecessor and has already produced documents that signal her clear vision of the future of the department. The documents are informed and informative, and they underpin much of the good work of the department, particularly, but not exclusively, in the area of formal assessment. She is supported particularly effectively by the senior management of the school and by her colleagues, whom she, in turn, supports. The head of department is aware of the need to develop in-class assessment techniques to monitor and evaluate pupils' learning and achievement within individual lessons. She is equally aware of the need for more intellectually rigorous challenges for gifted and talented pupils. She and her colleagues are good role models of commitment to the maintenance of the highest standards.
118. Overall, there has been very good improvement since the previous inspection, particularly in pupils' learning and achievement, which is reflected in their sustained high levels of attainment over the last two years.

## Religious education

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in both full and short-course examinations are, at least, above average.
- Teaching is generally very good, and some is excellent.
- The subject is very well led by a confident and very able head of department.
- The subject is taught as an academic discipline, which is helping to raise the profile of the subject across the school.
- There are no significant weaknesses. However, the department requires greater access to the school's computer suites.

### Commentary

119. Results in GCSE examinations are above average, taking both the full and short course into consideration. Targets are exceeded each year, and the numbers being entered for the full course rose from 35 in 2002 to 85 in 2003. Ninety-seven per cent of those entered for the full course in 2002 gained A\* to C grades, which is well above the national average. The indications are that this upward trend has continued in 2003.
120. Pupils' attainment by Year 9 exceeds the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. This is a good improvement since the last report. All pupils, including those who have special educational needs, make good progress and achieve very well. They are building on their own knowledge and experiences. For example, Year 7 pupils were thinking of symbols and their use. They wrote down the symbols that would remind them of David Beckham, using various headings. They suggested grass because he plays football on it, and spaghetti because of his braided hair!
121. By Year 9, pupils have acquired a good fund of knowledge and understanding upon which to draw. For example, in a lesson about worship, Year 9 pupils quoted the story of Paul's conversion when they were thinking of people who travelled for God. In Year 7, pupils investigated how some religious believers discover the existence of God. They used their own experiences to reflect on their own beliefs. Year 8 pupils first study the faith and practices of Judaism, and then some of the fundamental ideas and teachings of Christianity. Pupils in Year 9 study the growth of the early church, encounter the Bible for themselves, and later look at basic beliefs of Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism.
122. By Year 11, pupils' attainment is above average, with some examination results well above average. This represents very good improvement since the last inspection report. Those who do not enter the full-course examinations are entered for the short-course ones instead. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are learning to research and think for themselves very well. For example, in a good Year 11 lesson, pupils were preparing for work about the Five Pillars of Islam. They thought about five things in their lives that meant a lot to them, such as working with horses, parties and sport. Having grasped the idea of five very special things in their own lives, they went on to consider the five basic precepts for Muslims that underpin their whole faith. A lively discussion followed, and pupils learnt well, gaining a good, broad picture of the issues. They tackle difficult social topics, such as abortion and the sanctity of human life, prejudice and equality, and relationships, in Year 10. A more detailed study of Islam and its faith and practices is undertaken in Year 11, and they look at Muslim forms of worship, pilgrimage and sacred writings.
123. The quality of teaching and learning is, overall, very good, with a range from good to excellent. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen during the inspection. This is a very good improvement since the last report, when teaching was good.

124. A strong feature of the teaching is the very good relationships teachers establish with pupils. A Year 9 lesson provided a good example of this, when the teacher found something positive in every pupil's answer, however far from the point it was. Lessons provide very good challenge, and homework reinforces the topics well. Teachers convey the lessons' objectives very well, and pupils are very clear about what they are to do. For example, in a very good Year 11 lesson, the topic began with a time line of the key dates in the life of Muhammad (pbuh), setting the context very well. Pupils learnt very well and made good gains in understanding the early part of Muhammad's life (pbuh). Lessons move with a very good pace and present high levels of challenge for pupils, which motivates them very well, and enables them to learn very effectively. Teachers' use of assessment and marking is excellent. Pupils evaluate their own work with the teacher and then set their own targets. Marking shows pupils how they can improve, while still being positive in tone.
125. Both leadership and management are very good. The head of department is a religious education specialist who has a very clear vision for the subject and is very competent. Since the last report, the whole department has changed, with a new head of department, new staff and different pupils. Very good improvement has been made. In particular, standards have risen, and teaching is now very good, while last time it was good overall. One of the keys to the success of religious education is that it is treated as an academic subject, with a very good challenge to the lessons. This has raised its profile across the school, as can be seen from the steadily rising numbers opting to take the subject at GCSE, and later at AS and A level.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

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

- Excellent leadership and management have been very effective in steering the subject area through a difficult period of change and improvement.
- Teaching is very good and leads to very high standards at the end of Year 11.
- Procedures for assessing pupils' work are very good.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced, but the narrow focus of some resistant materials projects limits opportunities for higher-attaining pupils.

#### **Commentary**

126. Teachers' assessments for pupils at the end of Year 9 are very high, almost 30 per cent above national levels. Work seen during the inspection does not support this figure, but nevertheless shows that standards are above average and, given that pupils have a varied experience of technology on entry to the school, achievement is good. GCSE results were well above average in 2002, when nearly 78 per cent of candidates gained A\* to C grades. Provisional figures for 2003 indicate that they have risen even higher, a rising trend particularly marked in food technology. Pupils perform better in technology than in most other subjects, and the difference in performance between boys and girls is not as wide as the national figure.
127. Attainment at the end of Year 9 is above average, and there are instances of very high-quality work: for example, in textiles some folders contain wide-ranging research and are very well presented, often resulting in well-made practical work. Pupils make good use of ICT to gather research material and to improve the presentation of their work. In one Year 7 lesson, for example, pupils searched a website for images to support their 'desk tidy' project and could select, copy and manipulate the images and annotate them with confidence. Many pupils have very good literacy skills and write extended evaluations. Year 9 pupils, for example, carried out

independent research into the cultural background, symbolic significance, function and materials of headwear in their preparation for making hats. Pupils' practical and personal organisational skills are very well developed. Year 9 pupils, working on an 'airline food' project, organised their time, effort and resources and worked in a sensible, co-operative manner. Standards of lower-attaining pupils are higher than expected, because they work through a clearly defined design procedure and have developed good working practices. Pupils have good independent learning skills that they use in building on previous knowledge and experience. However, the limited focus of some resistant materials projects, while enabling all pupils to attain high standards of practical work, sometimes limits opportunities for higher attainers to extend the work on their own initiative.

128. At the end of Year 11, standards are well above average. The highest-attaining pupils have good, detailed design folders, with extensive research from a range of sources and a good balance of hand-drawn and computer-generated material. The clear structure of all courses and strong emphasis on examination assessment criteria help pupils to have clear objectives, resulting in very good achievement, with those with special needs making similar progress to their peers. Ambitious Year 11 resistant materials projects, for example, reflect a high level of commitment and design skill and require a range of higher-order practical skills and construction techniques. In graphics and textiles project folders, pupils set their design work in a social and cultural context, as in their research into the influence of teenage culture on clothing design. They use good technical vocabulary to write sophisticated nutritional and sensory evaluations in food technology. ICT is used very effectively and where appropriate, pupils incorporate computer-aided design and manufacturing techniques into their work.
129. Very good teaching, planning, knowledge of the subject and assessment procedures provide a rich and varied learning experience. High-quality displays of work and relevant stimulus material are common. Assessment is very good, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Thorough marking and detailed feedback give pupils clear objectives and constructive advice. Teachers have high expectations, to which pupils respond well, so that lessons have a purposeful atmosphere. The small proportion of satisfactory teaching lacks a confident and brisk classroom manner and insufficient involvement of pupils in discussion. The quality of teaching is monitored and good practice shared.
130. Excellent leadership and management have provided a clear vision through a period of change. Technology college status has prompted a valuable re-assessment of the department's work and objectives. Schemes of work have been revised and there are very good departmental self-evaluation procedures, resulting in realistic and appropriate targets for development. Accommodation and resources have been improved and are now very good. Access to, and use of, ICT and computer-aided design and manufacturing equipment is now good. There is a broad and balanced curriculum and a wide range of GCSE subjects, including a manufacturing course as a valuable alternative for those who benefit from greater practical experience. The good range of enrichment opportunities often involves parents and the local community, such as contact with a local food research centre. The department has been particularly active in sharing its expertise with primary schools, neighbouring secondary schools and trainee teachers.
131. There have been very good improvements since the last inspection.



## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

### Art

Provision in art is **excellent**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent leadership and management have brought about very good improvements since the last inspection.
- Results at the end of Year 9 and at GCSE are well above average.
- Progress and achievement for pupils currently in Years 9 and 11 are very good.
- Teaching and learning are very good.

### Commentary

132. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are well above average. In 2003, 95 per cent of pupils were awarded level 5 or above, and scrutiny of work and lessons during the inspection supports this high figure. Pupils attain very high standards. GCSE results are well above average. In 2002, 76 per cent of candidates gained A\* to C grades, against a national average of 65.3 per cent. Figures for the last three years show a rising trend, and preliminary figures for 2003 show a further improvement. Despite significant improvements, comparative figures show that pupils performed slightly less well in art than in some other school subjects, and that boys performed less well than the national expectation. The department has identified this and, as part of an overall strategy to correct it, has revised its assessment procedures to provide a much clearer picture of pupils' attainment and progress.
133. At the end of Year 9, pupils have developed a very good understanding of the 'vocabulary' of art and can combine the elements of line, tone, colour, shape and form with confidence and competence. From early in Year 7, pupils are encouraged to use sketchbooks to record and develop ideas, and these become increasingly important as a visual record of their attainment and progress as they move through the school. Year 7 pupils' early exercises in the use of line and tone reveal a wide variation in their standard of work and breadth of experience on entry to the school. By Year 9 they have made rapid progress, and the fluency with which they apply artistic techniques and express ideas using a range of media indicates very good achievement. Throughout the course, pupils are introduced to the work of established artists, and their critical evaluation skills become increasingly sophisticated. Teachers' discussions with pupils emphasise not just the techniques of art, but also the emotional impact. Higher-attaining pupils, for example, were able to produce an imaginative artistic response to the emotional power of poetry, and work on 'images of war' has enabled pupils to produce powerful individual responses, based on thorough research. Pupils are able to draw information and ideas from a range of sources, including the Internet, and use this as the basis for their own work. Homework is used effectively for this purpose.
134. During Year 10, pupils' sketchbooks become sophisticated records of technique and experimentation. For example, the highest-attaining pupils displayed a high degree of commitment and effort in recording research into the work of Hepworth, Goldsworthy and Gabo, in preparation for three-dimensional work on natural forms. Pupils have a high degree of understanding of artists' work, sources of inspiration and techniques, and can discuss their work in a mature and intelligent way. They can describe the influences on, and the reasoning behind their own work, and say how it will develop. Lower-attaining pupils and those with special educational needs become absorbed in the work and make comparable progress with their peers. For example, critical appraisal of Matisse's work by one lower-attaining pupil was extensive and individual, despite technical errors in her writing. By Year 11, pupils' ability to explore and develop ideas using a range of media, processes and techniques is very well developed, as are independent working skills. They are able to review and refine their work,

and can apply their very good literacy skills to writing, for example, detailed case studies of artists such as Bacon, Escher and Munch. Their 'work in the style of' such artists is complex and well executed. Achievement by pupils at the end of Year 11 is very good.

135. Pupils learn rapidly because teaching is very good. Teachers have a high expectation that pupils will work hard, behave well and reach their agreed targets. This is exemplified by the high level of discussion that takes place in lessons. Lessons for Years 7 to 9, for example, contain good opportunities for pupils to discuss their own work and the work of others during group evaluation sessions, and teachers use complex technical vocabulary in the confident expectation that pupils will adopt it themselves. Teachers are very skilled in a wide range of classroom techniques, which, together with confidence in their own skills and knowledge, enables them to manage pupils' work in an organised and productive way. Teachers are not afraid to discuss the wider issues of art. For example, in a very well taught lesson using Van Eyck's painting 'The Arnolfini Marriage' to illustrate the dynamics of painting, issues such as sex, passion and the values enshrined in the Christian concept of marriage were discussed in a sensible and mature way. Once pupils had been given the clues to unlock the symbolism of the picture, their understanding developed rapidly. Teachers are skilled at enthusing and involving pupils in their work, and this creates very good working relationships in lessons and a high-quality learning experience. Pupils' work is marked thoroughly and assessment procedures now provide a detailed picture of individual attainment and progress.
136. Leadership and management of the subject are excellent and have resulted in significant improvements since the last inspection. The head of department has managed the subject through a period of change, during which accommodation, resources and staffing have been radically revised and improved, after considerable disruption. Very good departmental self-evaluation has identified the contributory factors to boys' under-achievement and established measures to correct it. The curriculum is well balanced, planned with evident progression and well supported by extensive enrichment activities both in and out of school. Many of these involve the local community: nearby facilities are used to stage displays, visits are made to galleries and use is made of outside expertise. School exhibitions are well regarded by members of the local community. The quality of teaching is monitored, and both teachers share good practice. All the weaknesses highlighted in the last report have been improved.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards of attainment in the GCSE examination are above average.
- Resources for music technology are excellent.
- New accommodation provides an attractive environment.
- Instrumental teaching is very good.
- A large percentage of pupils learn to play instruments.
- Large numbers of pupils and several staff take part in an excellent range of extra-curricular activities.
- The level of challenge in lessons for pupils who are gifted or talented is not high enough.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to consolidate new knowledge through practical experience and example.

### **Commentary**

137. Pupils' attainment in music when they enter the school is average. The above-average standards seen during the inspection in Year 9 indicate good achievement at this stage. Because there are good opportunities to use musical technology, the vast majority of pupils learn to use this well. Pupils who play instruments perform competently, and those of higher

ability have well developed performance skills. Pupils' ensemble skills are good, because they listen well to each other when playing in groups. Lower-attaining pupils are able to read uncomplicated staff notation and understand the lay-out of the keyboard, but often have difficulty in developing fluency and co-ordination, partly because they have to share keyboards most of the time. However, pupils do not listen to their efforts in order to judge whether the results are musically logical. In one higher-attaining group, two girls were so intent on playing notes at the correct pitch that they failed to notice rests, and had not questioned the resulting unrhythmical effect they created. Higher-attaining pupils compose well-structured, musically attractive pieces, and average- and lower-attaining pupils are able to follow guidelines to create balanced pieces. Very few higher-attaining pupils extend their pieces or experiment with their own musical ideas. Younger pupils sing enthusiastically, but again do not listen to the quality of the sound in order to improve the effect.

138. Standards of attainment in Years 10 and 11 are above average; girls and boys achieve equally well. Pupils' attainment in composing is good, but most need to be more self-critical, and to think about the musical qualities of their work. Only rarely do higher-attaining pupils work imaginatively, extending their work beyond the suggested guidelines. Pupils' performing is generally good, and frequently very good, as a result of the very good standard of instrumental teaching. Because they have well-developed listening skills and good musical memories, their aural responses are good. In all year groups, pupils have positive attitudes towards learning and are anxious to succeed. They concentrate well in class, co-operate and participate readily, and achieve well.
139. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is never less than satisfactory, and has many good and some very good features. Teaching is better in Years 7 to 9 than in Years 10 and 11, where a pre-occupation with the requirements of the examination prevails at the expense of the development of pupils' natural musical abilities. Relationships are very good, lessons are properly planned, topics are appropriate and resources are good. However, teachers do not, at any stage, plan sufficiently for pupils' differing needs; as a result, higher-attaining pupils, especially boys, frequently under-achieve. When lessons are taught in an imaginative way, with careful consideration of pupils' potential, what they need to learn and how this can best be accomplished, lessons move at a lively pace, time is well used, and all pupils achieve well. In one very good lesson, two girls used a computer program to create an authentic-sounding arrangement of blues techniques they had learned earlier. Less successful lessons occur when musical objectives are not clear, and new knowledge is not properly integrated into practical experience. This occurs when teaching adheres slavishly to the text of the written scheme of work, without interpreting it in terms of the skills pupils need to acquire.
140. The department is well managed, and leadership is generally good. Assessment is informative and systematic, but it needs to link success criteria more closely to suggested National Curriculum levels, and to ensure that pupils know their attainment levels and how to improve. Monitoring of teaching needs to be more rigorous in order to make teaching good more consistently. The national literacy policy is supported by a clear display of technical words, but pupils' spelling errors are not marked, and there is no systematic development of descriptive vocabulary. Resources for music are very good. The attractive new buildings provide a pleasant environment; however, the delivery of the curriculum is inhibited by too few spaces for small groups, and the poor soundproofing prevents teaching and learning in adjacent rooms from being fully effective. There is not enough storage space for large numbers of personally owned orchestral instruments that are brought in for weekly rehearsals. The department's staff devotes a great deal of time, effort and expertise to running a number of very successful choral and instrumental groups, concerts are a regular feature, and the swing band is in popular demand at functions in the town and in the surrounding area.
141. Improvement since the previous inspection is good: attainment has been raised in all years, and the accommodation and provision for ICT has been considerably improved.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement across Years 7 to 11 is good.
- Standards at GCSE are very good and have steadily improved.
- The extra-curricular programme is a strength of the school.
- Pupils are not currently being assessed on entry to the school.
- Pupils' abilities to officiate and to evaluate one another's performance are under-developed.

### Commentary

142. Standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 are generally good, when compared with age-related expectations, in a range of games and gymnastics. Pupils exhibit a variety of skills in short-tennis, rugby and hockey, often accompanied with technical accuracy. While some lack controlled execution, others are at an advanced stage and perform confidently in a game context. In gymnastics, pupils show a range of ideas, and many perform individual and paired balances with poise and control. Girls are less ambitious than boys in performing in Year 7, but by Year 9 are keen to develop challenging sequences, with extensive use of large apparatus. All pupils move apparatus and equipment safely and efficiently. Pupils' achievement across Years 7 to 9 as a whole is good where units of work allow them to pursue an activity in some depth. However, principles of play across groups of games are not always fully understood.
143. Standards in core physical education by Year 11 are good, with many pupils achieving well in swimming activities, rounders and netball. Some individuals show exceptional levels of performance. Across Years 10 and 11, achievement in core physical education is good, because the programme allows pupils to build on activities that have been pursued in depth, such as netball and rugby, as well as to develop new areas such as water-polo and floorball. Pupils' ability to officiate, and to evaluate their own and others' performance, is under-developed.
144. At GCSE, all pupils achieve well, with an impressive number gaining A\* to C grades last year. Results are well above national averages for the subject. Many pupils exhibited very good striking and fielding skills in rounders. Their knowledge of rules and tactical considerations is also good. Standards of work in theory lessons are good, with the majority of pupils showing a good understanding of the potential effects of physical education and other factors on participation in sport; skeletal and muscular function; fitness; and training methods.
145. Achievement and endeavour across Years 7 to 11 is good. The incidence of non-participation is minimal. A significant number of boys and girls develop and refine their skills in the strong extra-curricular sports programme. It is a strong feature of school life and provides rich opportunities for a large number of pupils to engage in internal or external school competition. Many clubs also exist for those pupils who just want to participate, and these are well attended.
146. Teaching is generally good, with some of it very good or excellent. In Year 8, teaching is very good when it sets realistic tasks for the different abilities within the group, as in the gymnastics lesson where pupils rose to the challenge of developing a series of joint balances, and were then challenged to introduce apparatus into their balance. Across Years 7 to 11, learning of practical skills is good, but there are missed opportunities to draw attention to, and underpin, the wider aspects of literacy, numeracy and citizenship. Distinctive features of the teaching are the good command of subject knowledge and the healthy balance of individual, small-group and whole-class activity. Teachers offer good role models and often inspire by demonstration.
147. Leadership and management of the department are very good. There is a reflective culture, and the desire of the teaching team to pursue excellence but to marry this with a 'sport for all'

ethos means that overall provision for sport in the school is very good. The policy of setting by games, and the establishment of a programme that allows in-depth study as well as widening experiences in Years 10 and 11, are extending pupils. The use of assessment is weak and no baseline assessment on entry is available for monitoring progress.

148. The appointment of a school sports co-ordinator from within the team is a worthwhile initiative, and one of several improvements since the last inspection. Other significant improvements include the overall levels of staffing, the more coherent structure of the curriculum and the increased number of staff contributing to the sporting life of the school.

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

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

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

- There is some enthusiastic and committed teaching.
- The innovative method of recording citizenship on the school's intranet provides a very good monitoring tool for tutors and the teacher in charge.
- Some good teaching of citizenship occurs within personal, health and social education, and within some subject areas, notably physical education, music and drama.
- The school council and mentoring system provide pupils with opportunities to develop skills of 'participation and responsible action'.
- Not all subject areas' schemes of work identify how and where citizenship is to be delivered.
- There is a lack of accreditation and assessment of citizenship within subject areas.

#### **Commentary**

149. Citizenship is taught through personal, health and social education lessons, and also through subject areas. Although lesson observations suggest that provision is in fact better than satisfactory, there is no accreditation, assessment or identification of its presence, making it difficult to track the school's commitment to this area of study. There are several subjects in which elements of citizenship feature and benefit pupils' development in the areas of knowledge and understanding, enquiry and communication, participation and responsibility.
150. Where citizenship is taught, teaching and learning are good, and in some lessons very good. Some very good examples of effective teaching were seen in physical education, English, drama, music, modern languages, ICT and science, though citizenship had not been specifically identified in schemes of work or lesson planning in most of these lessons. Some subject areas identify citizenship within their subject handbooks. In citizenship lessons seen within personal, health and social education, pupils had a mature understanding of news reporting in Year 7 and elements of law making in Year 9.
151. Pupils' progress is only recorded within personal, health and social education at present. It is anticipated that this could be extended to record all aspects of citizenship education that pupils experience. The school council provides opportunities for all tutor groups to discuss how aspects of school life might be improved. Pupils' and students' involvement is encouraged, and issues and requests are dealt with seriously. A number of pupils in Year 11 are prefects, and some act as mentors to pupils in Years 7 and 8. They accept this responsibility willingly and are able to appreciate the benefits to their own personal development, as well as the importance of the roles in school life.
152. Leadership is good. The teacher in charge is enthusiastic and has developed an innovative intranet programme, which provides an opportunity for pupils to record what they have learned in lessons.

153. Management is satisfactory. There is still no clear account across all subjects to identify the teaching or assessment of citizenship. The present post holder has been responsible for the area for two years and has developed the programme within personal, health and social education, where it is effectively and efficiently taught and carefully monitored.
154. At present, not all subject areas formally identify and recognise pupils' achievements in citizenship and clearly plan for its inclusion in schemes of work.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002.

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

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English / English language	26	100	98.3	50	36.5	90	80.1
French	5	100	96.2	20	46.1	76	83
Mathematics	7	100	93.3	57.1	52.2	85.7	84.7
Physics	5	100	92.8	60.0	42.8	96	78.6
ICT	19	100	89	21.1	22.4	71.6	64.4
Geography	9	100	80.9	77.8	40.5	100	80.9
Design and technology (product design)	13	100	95.3	38.5	35.5	87.7	76.5
Drama	8	100	98.1	37.5	41.5	85	82.9
Media Studies	14	100	98.3	21.4	36.8	67.1	81.1
Sports studies	7	100	95.4	28.6	29.5	80.0	73.2
Business AVCE	16	100	96.4	50.0	32.8	87.5	76.5

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus subject for the inspection was English language and literature. English literature in Year 12 was also sampled. Teaching and learning on this course are very good, and standards are well above average.

### English language and literature

Provision in English language and literature is **very good**.

- Standards are well above average, with many students gaining the highest grades.
- Very good, stimulating teaching leads to good achievement and original thinking.
- The positive attitudes of students lead to lively debate and high standards of written work.
- Students do not read sufficiently widely, nor visit the theatre enough to extend their experiences of different styles of writing.

### Commentary

155. Results in the A2 examinations in 2002 were well above average. They have been consistently high for three years, but were slightly lower in 2003. Most students achieve or exceed their personal targets set by the school, and achievement is good. Male students do better than female students, but far more females elect to follow the course.
156. Standards of work seen during the inspection, both in Year 12 and Year 13, were well above average, with many students, male and female, achieving the highest grades. Students

display very good levels of critical analysis, both in class and small-group discussion, showing interest in and perception of the way language works. They make perceptive responses to their set texts, and know them well. They are independent thinkers, but only the very highest attainers read sufficiently widely or visit the theatre regularly. Original writing is accurate and thought-provoking, with assured analysis. Students in Year 12 were able to use their own writing to illustrate the techniques used by Bronte to create horrific effects in *Wuthering Heights*. Standards of literacy are very good.

157. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which enables them to explain difficult concepts clearly and communicate their love of literature to their students. They are adept at linking language and literature together, so that students understand how language works. Interesting methods, for example very focused group work on *A Streetcar Named Desire*, mean students are fully involved in analysis and concentrate closely. Students have a keen interest in their work, which promotes lively debate, in which they use literary terms fluently. Useful handouts provide supporting information, for example on social and historical background, and students carry out some research on the Internet.
158. Assessment is thorough, and students are shown how to improve, although there is not yet sufficient reference to specific assessment criteria. Often students have to improve and extend written pieces until the teacher is sure it is their best work.
159. Leadership and management are good. Areas of responsibility in the delivery of various components are clear, and schemes of work are now being rewritten in more detail. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. New examinations have been introduced successfully and standards have improved.

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

160. Standards of literacy are high. Students use specialist vocabulary accurately and teachers introduce it carefully. Students synthesise information from a wide variety of sources, which ensures good development of their literacy skills. Writing, reading and discussion are of a high standard.

### **Modern languages**

The focus of the inspection was AS and A level work in French. In addition, a Year 12 German lesson was seen, which was satisfactory.

#### **French**

Provision in French is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

#### *Strengths*

- Provisional A level results improved in 2003 to above average.
- Teaching is good and students learn well as a result.
- Resources are extensive and used imaginatively.

#### *Weaknesses*

- Teachers do not monitor students' independent work rigorously enough.
- Students are not required to correct or redraft their work.
- Students tend to achieve less well in speaking than in other language skills; there is no foreign language assistant.



## Commentary

161. A level results in 2002 were below average overall. However, numbers were low and the figures cannot be compared securely with the national average. Results in 2003 improved markedly. AS results in 2002 and provisional AS results in 2003 were broadly average. Nearly all students achieved well to gain these grades, given their performance in GCSE.
162. Standards in the current Year 13 are above average. Students' written work overall shows good control of grammar. Most students write accurately and re-use effectively the expressions and vocabulary they have recently learnt. Despite teachers' careful marking, however, students are not required to do corrections or redraft their work on a regular basis. They listen carefully to the teacher and to tapes and have a wide knowledge of vocabulary in listening and reading activities. Students' speaking skills are less well developed and several are reluctant to express their ideas and opinions.
163. Standards in Year 12 are average. Students are only a little way into their course, but they have already moved on well from their GCSE work in writing skills. They have tackled the study of more complex grammar work effectively and follow closely the carefully planned programme of vocabulary acquisition in reading and listening tasks. However, they are much less confident in speaking and most do not yet take part willingly in general discussion.
164. Teaching is good overall. Students learn and achieve well as a result. The main features are the challenging pace of the rapid French the students hear and the careful planning and preparation of materials to present new themes. These materials include tapes, videos and films. In Year 12, students do not have enough opportunities to practise their speaking skills. Unusually, there is currently no foreign language assistant to support students in this area of learning. Teachers have given students a wide range of web sites on the Internet to consult for their independent work, but they do not monitor regularly the students' use of them.
165. Leadership and management are good overall. Teachers assess and monitor students generally very well, except in independent work. The take-up of visits to France is currently low, though two students are going on the Loire Valley Homestay. Numbers taking languages continue to fluctuate from year to year. However, improvement since the last inspection is good, because of better teaching and a wider range of resources.

## MATHEMATICS

The main focus of the inspection was on AS and A level work in mathematics. Numbers studying mathematics at advanced level are healthy but could be greater. The school also offers a re-sit GCSE course for those studying A level in other subjects who did not achieve a grade C in mathematics in Year 11. Three or four students each year choose to take all of the options on offer, which leads to a qualification in further mathematics at advanced supplementary level as well as an A level in mathematics.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good for students on all courses.
- Most students enjoy the challenge of mathematics; their attitudes to their work and their teaching are very positive.
- In recent years some students have not made enough progress.
- Recruitment, although healthy enough, is not as high as it should be, given the well-above-average standards achieved by students in Year 11 GCSE examinations.

## Commentary

166. A level results in 2002 were in line with national averages. 2003 results were similar. The students' performance compared with their previous attainment levels was as expected in 2003, whereas in the two or three years previously students were not achieving as well as they should. The school has good arrangements for analysing test and examination results, and recognised that there was a difficulty. Appropriate action was taken, resulting in an improved curriculum and staffing arrangements, so that now achievement is as it should be.
167. Some students are admitted to study advanced mathematics courses in the sixth form who have studied the intermediate rather than the higher-level paper for GCSE, as well as some who have obtained only a grade C. These students are offered enhanced induction arrangements, in the shape of extra tuition and work to do during the summer holidays. Most are availing themselves of this offer, but are still finding it hard to come to terms with the work. Relatively few students fail to complete the A2 and AS level courses successfully once they have embarked upon them.
168. Recruitment into the sixth form for mathematics is fairly healthy, but does not reflect the fact that over three in five pupils gain a higher-grade GCSE in Year 11. Students in the sixth form said that they are enjoying the work and the challenge it presents. Pupils in earlier years, however, do not see mathematics in the same light. Too many, especially those who are very capable mathematicians, see it as being well and efficiently taught, but lacking excitement and restricting creativity in pursuit of 'right' answers. This is an issue that the department recognises must be addressed.
169. The standard of work seen during the inspection was broadly in line with national norms, as one might expect from the examination results. There was a range of attainment, with higher-attaining students in Year 13 producing good work on partial fractions and parametric equations, while lower-attaining students displayed a variable level of understanding of the concepts of work, energy and power and had a weaker grasp of projectiles. Statistics work looked stronger, with most able to calculate probabilities for a Poisson distribution using both formula and tables. Year 12 students also range in attainment from those who are finding the going hard to those who are likely to achieve the highest grades.
170. Teaching is good on all courses. Lessons are carefully prepared and well presented, providing the right level of pace and challenge for students of all abilities. The teachers are all experienced and well qualified. While almost all of the teaching seen was good and some very good, there was none that was excellent. The teachers feel under pressure to cover course curricula, which are full, with curricular time allocation that is adequate but not generous. The lessons seen therefore typically had good, clear explanation and demonstration, from which the students were able to learn readily and achieve well at the time of the lesson. The balance of methodology, however, was very much biased towards teacher-dominated lessons, with students doing less practical and discussion work than is best practice. There were examples of lessons for which this was not the case. The students spoke of a mechanics lesson in which they used scales and pulleys to see the effect of rising in a lift on the apparent weight of a body. In a Year 12 statistics lesson they were surprised to discover that the chance of throwing a six with a die is better on the first throw than on subsequent ones. From this they went on to a much clearer understanding of what is meant by a geometric series.
171. The students feel very well supported by their teachers. They feel free to approach them when they are in need of help. They also stressed how much more they enjoyed lessons with a practical content or context than those that were almost entirely theory based and could sometimes be rather dry.

172. The mathematics department is well led and managed. The teachers are enthusiastic and pull together as a team. A reflection of the teachers' commitment is that they give very generously of their time outside lessons, at break, lunchtime and after school, to provide extra tuition. The marking and assessment of students' work is very thorough and effective, even to the extent of checking notes to make sure they are accurate and complete. The students commented that this was very useful in helping them to identify their own weaknesses and improve.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

173. In general, the students' skills in mathematics are well developed, and there was no evidence to suggest that their academic progress is limited because of difficulty with numerical or graphical concepts. On the contrary, in several subjects, such as geography, skill levels observed were good or very good. Good contributions to the students' further development of their mathematics within a practical context occur in the sciences. This is also the case in physical education: for example, in a Year 12 lesson on anatomy and physiology, in which students were observed developing their understanding of the vascular system by carrying out an experiment with blood flow that showed, to their surprise, the marked difference in flow between thicker and thinner tubes. This emphasised for them the differences and similarities between arteries, veins and capillaries, demonstrating how obstructions can cause problems and pressure on the heart. The mathematics department makes no direct contribution to key skills development at sixth form level, beyond the course offered and referred to above, nor is there any perceived need for it to do so.

## **SCIENCE**

The focus subject was physics. Biology, chemistry and AVCE science were sampled. Lessons were observed and students' files examined. Over recent years, small numbers have taken chemistry through to A level and have gained results above the national averages. In biology, larger numbers of students have gained results that were well above the national average, apart from in 2003, when they were not as good as in previous years. The numbers now opting for these subjects in Year 12 and continuing on to A level are significantly higher. Individual achievement in both subjects by all students has been at least satisfactory and, for the majority, good. In both subjects, teaching over the full course is good, with many individual lessons very good.

The vocational course (AVCE) is newly introduced. In the first year of examination, all students passed, showing satisfactory achievement. Teaching and learning are good and numbers are rising.

### **Physics**

Provision in physics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Standards are consistently well above the national average.
- Very good technical support underpins students' high-quality experimental work.
- Over recent years, numbers taking the subject have been low.

### **Commentary**

174. Over the last four years, no student has failed A level physics, and the proportion gaining higher grades (A or B) has been consistently well above that seen nationally. Of the small numbers taking AS level, there has been an occasional failure, but the proportion of higher grades has been well above the national average. In 2003, three students took A level and two gained a higher grade; a much larger number took AS level and over half achieved an A or B grade. Observation of lessons and analysis of students' files and course work confirmed the

maintenance of these high standards. The current Year 13 class, which contains ten students, is building on the very good standards attained in Year 12. Eleven students have made a good start to AS level studies and are working at standards that should guarantee a pass grade, with at least half showing potential to attain a higher grade.

175. The standards reached by students at A level show achievement that is always at least good, and sometimes very good. At AS level, overall achievement is good, with the great majority gaining results that show improvement over their performance at GCSE.
176. Teaching and learning are consistently very good. All the lessons observed met this standard. The outstanding feature of teaching is the very challenging methodology. Students are made to think things out for themselves and not allowed to rely on prescribed ways of solving problems. Students find this approach difficult but very stimulating, and their learning is thorough and secure. Year 12 students, investigating Hooke's law, were required to design their own procedures for testing the effects of stress on springs arranged in parallel and series. This cleverly structured exercise, combined with skilled questioning, enabled all students to complete a successful investigation. Subtle variations in the amount of help given ensured that more was demanded of the highest-attaining students. Relationships between students and teachers are very good. The respect and trust that students have in their teachers enable them to respond positively to the very high expectations placed on them. As well as making demands on students, lessons also include variety and illustrations that add interest and relate physics to the real world. When learning about Einstein's famous equation ( $E = mc^2$ ), Year 13 students were deeply affected by the realisation that the Hiroshima atom bomb was a direct application of the awesome concept that matter and energy are interchangeable. Two teachers take responsibility for different parts of the syllabus. Both constantly build in cross-references, and their work is carefully co-ordinated so that students gain a coherent knowledge of the different aspects of the subject. Students are very well prepared for all requirements of the syllabus and examination.
177. All aspect of the courses are led and managed well. The choice of syllabus, use of high-quality experimental equipment and use of ICT contribute significantly to the quality of provision. Attainment and progress are monitored closely, and data is used very well to motivate students and provide guidance on how to improve.
178. Over recent years, the numbers taking physics through to A level have been very small for a school of this size and nature (there were only three students in 2003 and six in 2002). The present situation shows a marked improvement, with much larger numbers in both Years 12 and 13, which reflects recent improvements in both the science provision in Years 7 to 11 and the teaching of sixth-form physics. The new head of science and physics, who took up the post in September of 2002, deserves much of the credit for this rapid and impressive improvement. She is well supported by senior colleagues.
179. Since the last inspection, there has been very good improvement. All the weaknesses then identified in sixth-form science provision have been successfully addressed.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is very good.
- Standards in ICT are above national averages and have maintained this level over several years.
- Students are good learners.

- There is very good technical support.
- There is a lack of an accredited ICT course for students who do not take either AS or A2 examinations.

### **Commentary**

180. Standards in the 2003 AS and A level examinations were above national averages. Results have remained more or less at this high level over several years. These are popular courses and retention from AS to A2 is good.
181. Standards in the work seen and lessons observed are also above average. Year 13 students demonstrate good analytical skills and produce detailed and comprehensive specifications for their projects, showing very good awareness of the end-users' needs. They produce well-considered test strategies, evaluate their projects well and have good command of the software and of terminology. Students produce good designs for systems, annotate the progress of their work clearly and concisely and have a good grasp of what can be improved. The achievement of all students is good.
182. Teaching is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and impart this effectively to students, through high-quality feedback and support for ongoing work. There is very good pace and variety to lessons. This engages students very well and sustains their interest, for example in a revision lesson for Year 12 students on the creation of relational databases. The teacher worked very closely with students, building on their existing knowledge and understanding to create the database on screen. They shared a real feeling of achievement. Teachers make very good use of the interactive whiteboard in the department to stimulate learning, as well as providing object lessons on the power of ICT to enhance communication. They produce notes for their presentations that students can annotate. These provide a very good medium for revision. Relationships are very good and teachers promote lively question and answer sessions that advance learning well.
183. Leadership is very good. The head of department is a very experienced practitioner who communicates his expertise very well to others in the department. There is very good technical support that ensures smooth running of ICT systems in the school.

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

184. There is good provision of ICT resources for the sixth form, and students have good access to them. They can follow a key skills course as part of the enrichment programme, although only a small number actually do so. Though there are good examples of subjects using ICT as a tool to aid learning, notably design and technology and science, a good number of subjects lag behind.

## **HUMANITIES**

The focus of the inspection was on geography. In addition, history, religious education, sociology and psychology were sampled. In history, standards and achievement were good, the result of good teaching and learning. Provision for examination work in religious education and for those students in the sixth form who do not follow examination courses in religious studies is excellent. Results are well above average, both for AS and A level examinations. Teaching and learning were excellent in the small sample of lessons seen. In sociology, standards and achievement in Year 12 were good, as was teaching and learning. In Year 13, standards and achievement were average, as was teaching and learning. Standards in psychology were average; achievement was good, as a result of good teaching and learning.

## Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at A level are well above average.
- Students achieve very well, the result of very good teaching and close monitoring of their progress.
- Teachers are knowledgeable and use their experience well to help students develop good research skills and to prepare them for external examinations. Fieldwork investigations are of a high standard.
- Strong leadership and management help a committed team to work effectively and have led to improved standards.

### Commentary

185. The department caters for 30 students following AS and A level courses. This year's AS level group is smaller than usual. Students enjoy geography and regularly continue their education at universities, including Oxbridge.
186. A level results have improved since the last inspection, as a result of careful examination analysis, forward planning and very good teamwork. They have risen from above to well above the national average in 2002, when around three-quarters achieved higher grades. All students, mainly boys, passed, as they also did this year. They achieved very well in relation to their anticipated performance and compared with their other subjects. This year results were broadly average, compared to last year's results. Boys, having achieved good AS results, did not do as well as expected. The department is closely monitoring their progress this year. In 2003, AS results were very good. Everyone achieved very well and is now taking the A level course.
187. In the lessons and work seen, standards achieved by students are above average at AS level and well above average at A level. Students' achievement, including that of students who are gifted in geography, is very good. Year 12 students have made a good start. Teachers plan thoroughly and build successfully on work in the main school, meaning that, for example in population studies, students learn more quickly. Most showed good understanding and could give detailed explanations of the factors affecting population distribution. Others could highlight salient points, although their writing lacked detail. Good data response skills helped them to establish good links between population growth and structure. Higher-attaining students used evidence well to make predictions about what could happen in the future. Very useful literacy tips have helped students with structuring essays, resulting in clarity from all groups. They make competent notes, useful for revision. In tests and essays, Year 13 students show good knowledge and understanding of technical vocabulary and of how physical features are formed. They apply what they have learnt well, for example when linking information to a model illustrating how tourist areas pass through different stages of development. They have very good skills. Their individual studies show originality and the ability to carry out personal investigations, and they use numerical and ICT skills very effectively. Higher-attaining students showed very good theoretical understanding and followed a focused line of enquiry, using a good range of sampling techniques and statistical tests. Their explanations and conclusions were well substantiated; they were aware of the limitations of their investigations and suggested strategies for future action. Others used theory well to make their predictions and wrote sound evaluations.
188. Teaching is very good. Teachers' enthusiasm is effectively communicated and generates a lively response. Carefully planned activities, with well-produced supporting resources, sustain interest so that students work hard and learn very well. However, in one lesson, when

students gave clear presentations, not enough was done to improve further their presentation and discussion skills. By using their very good knowledge of the subject and the examination requirements, teachers help students to refine their thinking, understand and apply difficult concepts and prepare well for external examinations. Marking is detailed and supportive. Students have a clear idea of the progress they are making and find the deadlines given for completing work particularly helpful. Strong emphasis on independent study has helped students to develop good research skills. By Year 13, students work with a good degree of independence. Their work shows a high degree of commitment, although they do not use the library as much as they should for reading around their work. Students are very positive about the opportunities provided for fieldwork and feel that this aspect of their studies has helped them to improve their critical skills.

189. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department has clear ideas for improvement and leads a committed and very experienced team who work effectively together. Students new to the sixth form appreciate the support and guidance given to them. Thorough planning, reviewing and monitoring procedures have led to change. Information is used effectively to help students to improve. Improvement since the previous inspection is excellent.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

The focus of this inspection was design and technology product design, but textiles and food technology were also sampled.

The course in textiles was introduced in 2002 and the first group of students has yet to complete the full course. In work and lessons seen, teaching was good, and standards above average. Students have compiled comprehensive folios, with colourful and creative work and good presentation techniques. Food technology was introduced at the beginning of the current school year. Teaching is good and students are producing average standards at this early stage.

### **Design and technology, product design**

Provision in product design is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards of work are very high.
- A level results are well above average, with a high proportion of A and B grades.
- Students' achievement is very good.
- Teaching is very good and lessons are well planned as part of a carefully thought-out course.
- Very good assessment procedures provide students with accurate information about their progress and set clear targets for improvement.

### **Commentary**

190. A level results in 2002 were well above average. Eighty-five per cent of students gained A and B grades, and for the last 3 years there has been a 100 per cent pass rate. Provisional figures for 2003 are lower than this, but are still well above average. This should not be taken as indication of a downward trend, as work seen during the inspection was of a very high standard. Comparative figures show that students' achievement is very good. The most recent AS level module taken by present Year 13 students resulted in eleven B and five C grades. Students achieved an average of one grade above their predicted grade, but it is a measure of the school's high expectations that teachers felt that the quality of students' course work was higher than the grades awarded and has asked for a report from the examination board. Results are higher than at the last inspection.

191. Attainment for present Year 13 students is well above average and represents very good achievement. In work seen, there is a very high standard of designing and making. Students choose challenging projects, but ones that have a realistic chance of success. Project folders contain detailed, in-depth research, and students use a wide range of sources from which to collect information. Folders are well presented and include a good balance of hand-drawn and computer-generated work. Students make effective use of their very good ICT skills to collect and edit information, select and manipulate images, process data and text and present the information to a high standard. Students' good literacy skills enable them to write mature evaluations of their work and construct detailed case studies. These often include mature discussion of the social, moral and ethical issues surrounding a particular area of study. They have a very good understanding of technical vocabulary, practical processes and hand-made and industrial techniques. Standards of work by Year 12 students show a significant increase in quality and depth of work since the beginning of the course. Students can analyse a task well, plan their time effectively and show a good understanding of primary and secondary sources for research. They have an appreciation of the value of testing and experimentation with materials and processes, and use these to good effect. Because students have good independent learning skills and can use these to build upon previous experience, their achievement is very good.
192. Students learn rapidly and develop good independent learning skills. They are aided by very good teaching, by teachers who understand that students must play a major part in planning their own learning and set high expectations that they will do so. A high level of commitment from teachers produces a corresponding response from students, who work in a very productive and self-motivated way. Very good assessment procedures, and a thorough understanding of examination requirements, enable teachers to track student progress and give detailed advice on improvements. Students have very positive views about the value of the course and the quality of advice they receive.
193. Excellent leadership and management have resulted in the increased popularity of the course and the overall rise in standards. Student numbers have risen and the number of female students is increasing. Effective deployment of staff makes very good use of the range of skills and experience available within the department. This is supplemented very well by using contacts with local business and industry and exploiting the rich local heritage of design and craftwork. For example, students are placed with local companies that match the skills, materials and processes they need for their work. Close monitoring of teaching, standards and results enables effective decisions to be made and creates a climate for continued improvement, which, since the last inspection, has been very good.

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

### **Drama**

Provision in drama is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve very well.
- Teaching is very good.
- Students are highly motivated and eager to improve.
- Accommodation and resources are good.
- Enrichment opportunities are good.
- Students' writing skills are weaker than their practical skills.
- Some students lack confidence in taking part in discussion and expressing their opinions.



## Commentary

194. Students enter the course with average attainment in drama. Standards of attainment in A level drama in 2002 were average. All students obtained a pass grade, although none was awarded grade A. The attainment of female students is higher than that of male students. The most recent results are a little above average and include one grade A, and when compared with the results these students obtained in Year 12 show that attainment is improving. Achievement between Years 12 and 13 is good. Almost all students continue to study drama in Year 13.
195. Standards seen during the inspection in both Years 12 and 13 were very good. Students in Year 13 have developed good control over some important skills, such as vocal range and projection, pace and use of stage space. They work with a strong sense of integrity, aware of their responsibility to form a link between the author's intentions and the audience. One group of higher-attaining students demonstrated in their devised drama a highly creative, inventive approach, incorporating techniques such as mime, physical theatre and Brechtian methods. They set out to challenge the audience to become involved in the moral message contained in their drama about abuse; at the same time they were fully aware of their obligation to preserve respect for the significance of the issue. Students' research is extensive and thorough and their written work demonstrates depth of perception and insight. However, they need to develop skills specific to the requirements of the written part of the examination. In Year 12, students have made rapid progress, drawing together in trusting groups, and tackling character interpretation with growing confidence and not a little panache. Some students at this stage have difficulty in participating in discussion; some because they are diffident, and others because they lack the vocabulary to express their opinions simply.
196. Students learn well because teachers are well informed and well prepared. Relationships are very good, and clear underlying objectives, based on very good knowledge of individual students, underpin the progress of each student, both within lessons and over time. Imaginative strategies ensure that learning takes place with full impact. In one very good lesson in which students were introduced to Stanislavski's use of emotional memory method, the well-focused directorial consideration of character interpretation was followed by opportunities for improvisation, so that students could experiment with the concept of the interplay of emotions.
197. Leadership and management in the department are very good. The head of department, recently appointed, leads a team of three teachers who are confident in their own expertise and who readily share good practice in order to raise attainment further. Thorough assessment systems ensure that students know what their achievement is, and how they can improve. Students spoke appreciatively of the commitment shown to them by their teachers. Weaknesses identified during the inspection have already been recognised by the department, which is devising strategies to counter these. Accommodation and resources are very good. Students have regular opportunities to visit live theatre, and to become involved in the school's programme of productions. Visits to the Shakespeare resource centre in Stratford have become a valuable source of information and research, and festival events in nearby towns are publicised in the department.
198. The good standards seen during the previous inspection have risen further. Examination results are improving, and the subject is now studied by male and female students in roughly equal numbers. Drama is now firmly embedded in the range of choices open to students. Accommodation has greatly improved. Overall, improvement is very good.

## Media Studies

Provision in media studies is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is some enthusiastic and committed teaching, with careful planning and good schemes of work.
- Assessment of work in progress provides good guidance.
- Support from teachers enables those students with lower attainment in English to produce a good standard of work.
- The lack of use of media terminology in lessons leads to students not attaining the higher grades.
- Results in Year 13 are lower than those achieved in Year 12 by the same students.
- There is a lack of media-specific knowledge among teaching staff.

### Commentary

199. Standards in media studies are broadly average when compared with national results. Achievement in lessons is currently satisfactory or better, but achievement over time has been unsatisfactory and recent A level results have been lower than might be expected from the students' prior attainment in all GCSE subjects and in Year 12. The majority of students have not attained their expected grades. In the work seen during the inspection much was successful but too little attention was paid to the use of media terminology, and many students were not using basic media language in their analysis of either still or moving image texts.
200. Teaching is good overall. Teachers are very committed and enthusiastic. All teaching seen was at least satisfactory, with some good features. In work seen, marking was good or better in providing guidance to help students meet future targets. There is some lack of media education knowledge, which results in a general lack of use of media language by teachers, and also general rather than specific analyses of texts. Students' evaluation of practical production work is descriptive and implicit.
201. Learning in lessons is good overall. The schemes of work provide a range of opportunities for all students. Texts chosen meet the various needs of the two groups of students. This ensures that the wide spectrum of ability within the groups is sufficiently challenged in assignments. Students, when given the opportunity, discuss topics with maturity. Production work is very good. There are some excellent examples of high-level practical skills and very good use of the specialist facilities available to media studies students.
202. Media studies was introduced in 1998 and is very popular with students; groups are large in both years. Assessment is good and provides good advice and guidance. However, marking pays insufficient attention to the use of media terminology. The new, purpose-built facility enables students to produce high-quality practical work. Students produce detailed notebooks on the production process, but evaluation of the final product is not well developed.
203. Leadership and management of media studies are good. The teacher in charge is enthusiastic about the subject and this is conveyed to students, resulting in large numbers selecting the subject. The majority of students complete a two-year course. Assessment informs future learning and careful analysis of results is carried out to identify why students' performance in examinations is not as good as in course work.

## HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

During the inspection the provision for A and AS level was inspected, along with enrichment offered by the community sports leader award programme and the recreational physical education programme.

### Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- A and AS level work is now available, as well as enrichment opportunities in sport.
- Good numbers of students gain A to E grades at A level.
- Student research and presentation skills are limited.
- Some students under-achieve at AS and A level.

### Commentary

204. Standards in the work of Year 12 and 13 students observed during the inspection are in line with expectations of student academic potential. A significant number of students have been successful in gaining A to E grades since the introduction of A level three years ago. Attainment at AS level shows an upward trend, although last year's results were disappointing. Some of the higher-attaining students are not gaining the grades of which they are capable in Year 13. Students show appropriate knowledge and understanding of physiological and psychological factors affecting performance, and the links they make with previous learning are generally sound. In a Year 12 session, students were working on the topic of energy systems and linking them to training methods. With promptings from the teacher, they were able to make appropriate links to related aspects of 'interval' and 'fartlek' training. In Year 13, students showed a positive approach to learning about pre-industrial games, and showed valid insights into the influences and features affecting the historical development of games in our culture. Students try to draw on personal experience to relate theory to practical examples. However, some students do not read around the topic independently, prior to teaching sessions. Research skills of some students are weak and they lack experience in the key skill of presenting findings, making them over-reliant on teacher input. The approach to work by a significant number of students is too passive.
205. Achievement in AS and A level reflects the amount of independent work put in by individual students; those who rely exclusively on the teacher under-achieve. On the community sports leader award course in Year 12, students are making very good progress and their achievement on this course enables them to make significant contributions to the wider sporting life of the school.
206. Teaching is generally good, with examples of excellent teaching. Teachers endeavour to provide a range of interesting tasks to engage students. Subject knowledge is good and enables teachers to provide stimulating examples to illustrate their teaching. In the very good sessions, pace is maintained throughout and questions are directed at individuals, always encouraging the link between theory, practice and previous learning. The teacher knew his students and was able to direct questions appropriately in order to enhance learning and test their knowledge of the topic. Teachers' overall expectations of their students are often high, but insufficient demands are put on students in some aspects of their work: they are not expected to research specific themes independently, carry out preparatory work or provide evidence from the media relating theory to practice. Little use is made of extension tasks for the higher-attaining students. Although some aspects, such as anatomy and physiology, are taught outside the department, the teachers show a genuine enthusiasm for their subject and always endeavour to link scientific concepts to practical issues within sport, fitness and health. Teaching on the community sports leader award course is excellent. Intended outcomes are

clearly outlined at the start of lessons. There is very good pace to the teaching, as in the session which involved all students in exploring problem issues associated with becoming an effective communicator.

207. Leadership and management of the programme at sixth-form level are good, although there are timetabling issues of continuity within the AS and A level programme. The involvement of a large number of teachers, some from outside the physical education department, is problematic, but co-ordination of this is generally handled well. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, when AS and A level did not feature on the sixth-form programme. The community sports leader award is another important development. There is also a recreational physical education programme, and students are encouraged to find a place for physical activity in their programmes. Some sixth-form students make an invaluable contribution to the extra-curricular programme, not only through representation in the high level of competitive sport, but also by assisting teaching staff in coaching and administrative duties.

## **BUSINESS**

The business studies department offers a wide range of provision in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. In Years 10 and 11, GCSE courses in business studies and applied business are offered. In the sixth form, the school offers AS and A2 levels and AVCE. The inspection focused on AVCE.

### **Business studies AVCE**

Provision in business studies AVCE is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards of attainment are above national levels.
- The department has a stable teaching team that offers continuity and good teaching to students.
- The head of department has a clear vision for the future of the department.
- The head of department has built good relationships with local businesses, which are effective in enhancing students' experience and learning.
- The rigour of formal assessment of students' work is not replicated in the monitoring of ongoing assessment of learning in the classroom.
- Accommodation, including wider access to ICT, is unsatisfactory for current provision and is insufficient for the potential expansion of the department.
- Wider reading and methods to assist independent learning are not sufficiently encouraged.

### **Commentary**

208. In 2002, results in AVCE were above national expectations. In 2003, the unvalidated results show standards that are well above national levels. In class work and in their files, Year 13 students attain standards above national norms in understanding the central ideas of business. Higher-attaining students understand the economic environment in which business operates, and are good at incorporating their theories into contextual examples. Lower-attaining students' course work is well-produced and professionally presented. The strength of the Year 12 students' class work is their basic understanding of the subject matter and the steady accumulation of knowledge. In both years, higher-attaining students are increasingly confident with the analysis, interpretation and evaluation of data. Lower-attaining students have relative weaknesses in these areas.

209. Given their levels of prior attainment on entry to the sixth form, most students in both years achieve well, but many do not fully achieve their potential, due mainly to the lack of wider and in-depth reading around the subject. Higher-attaining students maintain intellectual rigour and portray evidence of wider reading. However, some students, particularly in Year 13, display an immaturity in class that stops them from achieving their full potential.
210. Overall, the quality of the teaching is good, although some lessons were very good. No lessons were unsatisfactory. The best lessons were typified by teachers' excellent rapport with students. Effective use is made of case studies, such as the Campden Research case study, and other activities to allow students to apply and extend their learning. Progress is best when students apply assessment and evaluative criteria to their work and where teachers check their learning throughout individual lessons. On the rare occasions where teaching is only satisfactory, it is characterised by a lack of effective strategies to encourage students to engage more actively in their own learning.
211. Leadership and management are good. The head of department gives effective leadership to the subject. Under his supervision, the department has emerged from difficulties with staffing and now has a stable staff, who offer continuity of learning. This impacts favourably on students' achievement. The head of department has a clear vision for the future of the department, and plans to strengthen both the academic and the vocational aspects of the department's provision to meet the differing needs and aspirations of future cohorts of students, and to gain parity of esteem for the subject. He has built good relationships with local businesses, which enhance students' experience and learning. He is aware that current accommodation is inadequate, in terms of both size of rooms and adequacy of specialist accommodation. Insufficient access to ICT and the concomitant professional software has an adverse effect on learning. This was an issue in the previous report. The rigour of formal assessment of students' work is not replicated in the monitoring of ongoing learning in the classroom.
212. Since the previous inspection, the department has made good progress, particularly in raising standards and establishing a stable and strong teaching team.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

While the AVCE course in Health and Social Care was not a focus of the inspection, its provision was sampled. Standards are well above average and teaching very good.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

