

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **ST MARY REDCLIFFE AND TEMPLE SCHOOL**

Bristol

LEA area: City of Bristol

Unique reference number: 109327

Headteacher: Mr D R McGregor

Lead inspector: Mrs D Wheatley

Dates of inspection: 23<sup>rd</sup> - 26<sup>th</sup> February 2004

Inspection number: 259222

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

© Crown copyright 2004

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1290
School address:	Somerset Square Bristol
Postcode:	BS1 6RT
Telephone number:	0117 377 2100
Fax number:	0117 377 2101
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr C Spivey
Date of previous inspection:	January 1998

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

St Mary Redcliffe and Temple School is a large Church of England voluntary aided 11 to 18 comprehensive school in the centre of Bristol. It is popular and oversubscribed, taking boys and girls from a wide geographical area throughout the city and beyond. It has a large and growing sixth form. Most pupils stay on to pursue their post-16 studies at the school and it also attracts pupils from other institutions. The pupils' backgrounds represent a range of socio-economic circumstances which, in the main, are advantaged, with well below average numbers on free school meals. The attainment of the majority of pupils is above the national average on entry in Year 7 and a considerable proportion is well above average. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs, including statements, is below average. The main special needs catered for are speech and language deficiencies, emotional and behavioural difficulties, moderate learning needs and dyslexia. There is a higher than average proportion of pupils from mixed race and minority ethnic families. Most are fluent English speakers; currently nine pupils are being supported in developing their English language skills. Recently, the school achieved Specialist Humanities College status.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3538	Mrs D Wheatley	Lead inspector	
9588	Mr A West	Lay inspector	
15268	Mr J English	Team inspector	Mathematics
19214	Mr G Price	Team inspector	English
10160	Mr R Bagguley	Team inspector	Science
31385	Mr N Gillespie	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
8159	Mr K Wright	Team inspector	Art and design
17156	Mr E Graham	Team inspector	Design and technology
14573	Mr H Wareing	Team inspector	Geography
31772	Mr A Kelly	Team inspector	History Citizenship
30911	Mr J Barton	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
31673	Mr J Gwyer-Roberts	Team inspector	Music
17987	Mr B Coates	Team inspector	Physical education
20832	Dr M Galowalia	Team inspector	English as an additional language Biology in the sixth form
7958	Ms G Lewis	Team inspector	Special educational needs
20324	Prof V Morris	Team inspector	Business studies Work related studies
12191	Mr C Moxley	Team inspector	Media studies
12825	Dr N Carr	Team inspector	Psychology in the sixth form
13155	Mr J Dixon	Team inspector	French in the sixth form

The inspection contractor was:

Bench Marque Limited  
 Barley House  
 Oakfield Grove  
 Clifton  
 Bristol  
 BS8 2BN

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AND STUDENTS</b>	<b>10</b>
Standards achieved in subjects and courses	
Pupils' and students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>15</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES</b>	<b>26</b>
Work-related learning	
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4</b>	
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>59</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

St Mary Redcliffe and Temple School provides a **very effective** education for its pupils. It achieves well above average standards and has a strong Christian ethos which is characterised by warm relationships and very good personal development of pupils. The teaching is good overall and a considerable proportion is very good. Leadership is very strategic with a strong focus on improvement. The school achieves very good value for money. Its effectiveness is recognised in a number of national accolades including Beacon status and achievement awards. It has also recently achieved Specialist Humanities College status.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Well above average standards overall in the main school, and above average in the sixth form.
- The excellent leadership of the headteacher and strong governance of the school.
- Very good personal development of pupils which is reflected in their mature attitudes and behaviour.
- Strong community and parental links.
- Very effective partnerships with other schools and colleges.
- The broad range of extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities which are particularly strong in music and physical education.
- Parts of the accommodation are still unsatisfactory despite very significant improvements, including the provision of new buildings, in recent years.
- The assessment process is making a positive impact in some subjects but there is more to be done to ensure it contributes to improving learning in all areas.
- The monitoring and evaluation of effectiveness are not consistently applied throughout the school.

The school has improved very well since its last inspection. It has maintained its well above average standards and effective teaching despite some staff recruitment difficulties. It has responded very well to the issues identified in the last inspection, making good improvements to the teaching of information and communication technology (ICT), the use of targets to track pupil progress and the accommodation.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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.*

Standards are well above average in Years 9 and 11, and above average in the sixth form. Achievement is good overall. It is very good in history in the main school (Years 7 to 11) and in ICT, psychology and media studies in the sixth form. Standards in literacy and information technology are above average. In numeracy, they are above average in the sixth form and well above in the main school. Pupils with special educational needs, and those who are at an early stage in learning English, achieve well.

The personal development of the pupils is very good. The strong provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is reflected in the mature and responsible attitudes of the pupils and the warm relationships throughout. The school's key values are identified and inform many aspects

of its work. There is strong emphasis on inclusion. Pupils from minority ethnic groups are well integrated and thrive in the school. Attendance is well above average.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The quality of education is good. Its impact is seen in the effective learning throughout. The teaching is almost always at least satisfactory with a high proportion of good and very good lessons. Some outstanding teaching was seen during the inspection. The teaching is strong in history throughout the school, and in ICT and psychology in the sixth form. Great strides have been made in the provision of performance data and its use to set targets for pupils. However, whilst some subjects are using this very effectively to raise achievement, others are not yet wholly secure in its use.

The curriculum is broad and provides very well for the needs of pupils. As well as strong academic provision, vocational and work-related options have been developed to meet the needs of particular pupils. Appropriate plans are in hand to extend this provision as part of the Specialist Humanities College developments. The curriculum is enriched by a very good range of extra-curricular activities and strong links with the local community. Provision is particularly strong in physical education and music.

The care and guidance of pupils are very effective. There are strong partnerships with local schools and colleges and good links with parents. New buildings and major refurbishment to existing accommodation have greatly enhanced the school environment in recent years. Further, plans to provide a new sixth-form building next year will relieve the very crowded conditions currently experienced. Nonetheless, some parts of the accommodation are still unsatisfactory and adversely affect teaching and learning.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership, which includes clear vision and direction and a drive to improve further. He is very ably supported by well-informed governors and a strong leadership team. The leadership of subjects is very good overall. Strategic planning is strong and whilst there is good monitoring and evaluation of quality this needs to be developed further to ensure consistency across the school.

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

The parents have very positive views of the school with which the inspectors concur. Some concerns raised about the arrangements for reporting pupils' progress have been addressed by the school. The quality of reports is very good. The pupils who responded to the questionnaire also showed high levels of satisfaction with the school, although a number referred to instances of bullying. During the inspection, pupils indicated there was very little bullying and on the rare occasions when it occurs it is swiftly and effectively dealt with.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Continue efforts to improve the quality of the accommodation.
- Ensure assessment, target setting and tracking are used effectively throughout the school to improve learning.
- Further develop the monitoring and evaluation procedures in subjects.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure the statutory requirements for collective worship in the sixth form are fulfilled.
- Ensure that the safety concern regarding a machine in design and technology is tackled without delay.

## THE SIXTH FORM

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is **very effective** and provides **very good value for money**. Students achieve well: their attainment in A-level examinations is above average in most subjects and there is very good provision to prepare students for their further studies and for life outside school. Attainment at A-level has improved well since the last inspection, when it was broadly average.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Teaching is very good and standards are above average in most subjects.
- Very good provision is made for students' personal development.
- Procedures for student support and guidance, and for ensuring that they keep up with their work, are very good.
- Students respond well to the trust the school places in them, and attitudes are mature.
- Leadership and management of sixth-form affairs are very strong.
- A wide-ranging curriculum is offered to suit the needs of all students, and there are good collaborative arrangements with other post-16 providers in the city.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory, but new premises are planned.
- There is not a daily act of collective worship for all students.

In 2002, students' performance in A-level examinations was well above the national average. Almost half the students achieved the highest grades A and B. The results dipped in 2003, when just over a third of students achieved the highest grades. Whereas in 2002 male students outperformed female students by a considerable margin, the latest results show little difference in performance. The strongest subjects in 2003 were mathematics, English literature, physics, media studies and German.

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

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	<p><b>English</b> provision is <b>good</b>. Teaching and learning are good and the work of many students is above average. Standards of literacy in the sixth form are above average. Students have no difficulty in meeting the language demands of all subjects. A lesson in drama and theatre studies was also sampled. Teaching is good and students make sound progress.</p> <p>Provision in <b>French</b> is <b>good</b>. Teaching is good and often imaginative, and students achieve well and make good progress. Two lessons of German were sampled, and students were achieving appropriate standards.</p>
Mathematics	<p>Provision in mathematics is <b>good</b>. The students in Year 13 achieve very well because of very good teaching, and achievement in Year 12 is satisfactory. Standards of numeracy are above average across the sixth form and support students' learning well in their other subjects.</p>
Science	<p>Provision in <b>biology</b> is <b>good</b>. Good teaching and learning lead to above average standards and good achievement.</p>
Information and communication technology	<p>The provision for information and communication technology in the sixth form is <b>very good</b>. Standards and achievement are very good. There is an excellent range of opportunities for all students to improve their skills through a number of routes to accreditation.</p>



Curriculum area	Evaluation
Humanities	<p>History, geography and psychology were the focus subjects. In addition, one lesson in law was sampled and the teaching was <b>very good</b>.</p> <p>Provision in <b>geography</b> is <b>good</b>. Students learn well as a result of good teaching and make good progress from their success at GCSE.</p> <p><b>History</b> provision is <b>very good</b>. Well-informed teaching leads to high standards.</p> <p>Provision in <b>psychology</b> is <b>very good</b>. Teaching and learning are very good. Students are well motivated and enjoy the scientific research involved. Studying psychology is new and exciting work.</p>
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	<p>Provision for design and technology is <b>very good</b>. Above average standards are achieved by students because the quality of teaching is good and sometimes very good.</p>
Visual and performing arts and media	<p>Provision for media studies is <b>very good</b>. Students respond very well to dynamic teaching and high expectations, and achieve very well.</p>
Business	<p>Provision for business studies is <b>good</b>. Standards are above average and achievement is good as a result of teaching which is mainly good.</p>
General education	<p>The school's programme for key skills, the personal development of students and preparation for higher education is <b>very good</b>. The work is extremely well planned and very well taught.</p>

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

## ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The school has very good provision for the advice, guidance and support given to students. Targets are set and there are regular reviews of work to ensure that students are on track and achieving appropriate standards. Preparation for the next step into higher education is very thorough, and the school plans to increase the availability of careers advice for those students who leave full time education at age 18.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is very well led. Strategic planning is very good; there is a clear sense of direction. Numbers on roll have increased considerably in the past few years and the size of the sixth form is set to increase again in the near future as the school takes up its key role in the reorganisation of post-16 education through the development of the new city-wide sixth-form campus. The management of the sixth form by a team of very experienced teachers is very strong, and makes very good provision for student welfare and progress. Shared provision with other post-16 providers is well managed to ensure breadth of curriculum opportunities.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students were very positive in their response to the pre-inspection questionnaire. Without exception they indicated that they enjoyed being at the school, that teaching was challenging and promoted high standards, and that their work was well assessed and they were given good help and guidance to improve. Where their responses were more negative, inspectors found that careers advice for students not intending to go on into higher education could be improved, but some students' views that they did not have a person to whom they could turn for help and that there were insufficient enrichment activities were not borne out by inspection findings.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AND STUDENTS

#### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards are well above average overall in Year 9 and Year 11 and above average in the sixth form. Pupils and students achieve well throughout the school. Skilled teaching, very good attitudes by pupils and students, and leadership which is well focused on improvement contribute to the good standards. Standards in literacy and ICT are above average. In numeracy, they are above average in the sixth form and well above in the main school. Pupils with special educational needs and minority ethnic pupils, including those who are at an early stage in learning English, achieve well.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Both the GCSE results and the attainment in the national tests in Year 9 are well above the national average. Results in post-16 examinations are above average.
- The achievement of pupils is good throughout the main school (Years 7 to 11) and the sixth form.
- The school caters well for different groups of pupils, including the gifted and talented, those with special educational needs and pupils from minority ethnic groups.
- Pupils are keen to learn and to make the most of what the schools offers.
- There is focused attention to examination requirements in the teaching.
- Assessment practice has improved since the last inspection. Comprehensive performance data is provided but there is more to do to ensure consistency in its use to improve learning.

#### Commentary

1. The results in the national tests in Year 9 have been well above the national average overall for the last three years. In 2003, the English results fell to above, rather than well above, average. When compared to schools with similar results in the tests taken in Year 6 (at primary school), mathematics and science are average but English is well below average. The drop in English results, to which changes in staffing and some weaknesses in planning contributed, brought the school's Year 9 performance trendline below the national in 2003.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	35.3 (38.1)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	39.4 (38.1)	35.4 (34.7)
science	37.3 (36.4)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 199 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

2. GCSE results have been well above the national average for the last three years. When the 2003 results are compared to schools with similar prior attainment in Year 9, the results remain well above average overall, although the proportion of pupils obtaining five or more A\*-C grades is above average. The school's GCSE performance trend is rising in line with the national trend. Although there are some variations in boys' and girls' attainment in subjects from year to year, by and large, the gender gap is smaller than is found nationally. This is the result of good monitoring of the achievement of boys and action to address any indications of underachievement. It is also owing to the strong motivation to achieve by both boys and girls.

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

	School results	National results
--	----------------	------------------

Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	76.0 (78.0)	51.5 (49.9)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	97.0 (96.0)	90.9 (90.5)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99.0 (97.5)	95.9 (96.0)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	43.5 (44.2)	34.7 (34.7)

*There were 193 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. The school is not complacent about its success. Sustaining high standards is a key focus for the staff. Challenging targets are set, including targets for the highest GCSE grades and Year 9 test levels. There is also good attention to the demands of the examinations in the teaching. In 2003, the Year 9 English target was not achieved for the reasons indicated above. The GCSE targets were met, improving on a slight dip in one of the key performance indicators the previous year. The use of data to analyse performance and track progress has been considerably developed since the last inspection. It is used effectively at a whole-school level to monitor progress and support pupils in danger of underachieving, although some subject departments could use it more actively to promote learning.
4. Standards seen during the inspection were well above average overall in Year 9 and Year 11 and above average in the sixth form. The achievement of both boys and girls is good throughout the school, although it is strongest in Years 10 and 11. The basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are secure. Above average standards in literacy enhance learning throughout. Pupils have good speaking skills, being confident, articulate and keen to engage in discussion. Standards of numeracy are above average in the sixth form and well above average in Years 7 to 11. Pupils' ICT skills are also above average and are used well to support learning in subjects.
5. The issues which led to the fall in English results in Year 9 last year are being addressed satisfactorily. The inspection found standards in English to be above average by the end of Year 9 and well above by Year 11. The achievement of pupils is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9; it is good in Years 10 and 11. Standards in mathematics and science are well above average throughout the main school and achievement is good. In history, the standards are well above average throughout and achievement is very good. Well above average standards and good achievement are found in geography throughout and in business studies and art and design in Years 10 and 11. In all other subjects, standards are above average, except in physical education where they are broadly average. Achievement is good throughout.
6. Pupils with special educational needs make good progress in lessons and over time as a result of the support they receive in class and in withdrawal groups. Many go on to achieve creditable levels and grades in the Year 9 tests and at GCSE. In Years 10 and 11, the pupils who follow the ASDAN course are making great strides and have a tremendous sense of achievement. All have achieved the Bronze Award, many are completing the Silver Award and one pupil is working toward Gold.
7. Gifted and talented pupils achieve well. They are the focus of extra provision which seeks to develop their talents and aptitudes, for instance in music. Their progress is evident in the above average proportions of the highest A/A\* grades at GCSE. Pupils from minority ethnic groups are well integrated and achieve well. Those who are at an early stage in learning English also make good progress.

**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	99.6	95.0
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	49.8	39.0
Average point score per student	269.2	263.3

*There were 109 pupils in the year group.*

## **Sixth form**

8. Examination performance post-16 in 2002, the last year for which there are national comparative figures, was above the national average. Male students' performance was well above the average for males and female students were above average for females. Results in 2002 showed an improvement over those for the previous year.
9. Performance in individual subjects has fluctuated over the past few years. The most consistent subjects with high levels of performance above or well above the national average have been biology, history, mathematics and English literature, with art and design, geography and physics showing an improving trend.
10. A feature of the examination performance in 2002 was that in most subjects over half of the students entered achieved the highest grades A and B, and in geography, mathematics and physics this was the case for around two-thirds of those entered. In all, just less than half of the students entered achieved grades A or B in the A2 examinations in 2002. This is ten per cent above the national average. Students' performance was well above average in the majority of subjects, but below average in drama and religious studies.
11. In 2003, the overall performance of students in the A-level examinations was not as good as in 2002. Just over one third of subject entries were at the highest grades and, unlike in previous years, there was little significant difference between the performance of male and female students. Over half of the students entered achieved the highest grades in mathematics, physics, English literature, art and design, media studies and, from a very small entry, German.
12. In the work seen during the inspection, students achieve well relative to their prior attainment, and many achieve very well. In Years 12 and 13, standards are above average in all the subjects inspected, and well above average overall in ICT, media studies and, in Year 13 in mathematics. Good achievement is directly related throughout to good and very good teaching, high expectations and the mature attitudes of the students.

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

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good throughout the main school and the sixth form. The pupils show strong interest in school activities and their personal development is very good. Relationships are excellent. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good overall with some elements being excellent. Attendance is also very good throughout.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils' positive attitudes and very good behaviour make a significant contribution to their progress as learners, and particularly so in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form.
- Relationships in the school are excellent.
- The school's strategies for pupils' personal development are very good; the moral and spiritual aspects are excellent.
- Arrangements for the school to improve attendance and punctuality are very effective and are reflected in the improvements in these aspects since the last inspection.
- The school's behaviour management strategies are effective, although there were several fixed-period exclusions last year.

- Lateness to lessons is occasionally a problem in the sixth form.

## Commentary

13. In class, at assemblies and around the school, pupils behave very well, especially in Years 10 and 11. In Years 7 to 9, the pupils' behaviour in lessons is good. Pupils of all abilities work hard, remain on task and concentrate well. However, in classes where the pace and expectations are too low, inappropriate behaviour can occasionally interfere with learning. Pupils with special educational needs and those with English as an additional language display positive attitudes towards their work and generally behave well. They remain positive when tackling tasks they find difficult.
14. The school's strategies and policies for improving behaviour are effective and contribute significantly to ensuring pupils concentrate well on their learning. A variety of strategies are used to good effect, including praise, reward and sanctions. There is a referral process and a duty teacher scheme that are particularly effective in tackling misbehaviour. Fixed-period exclusion rates for the reporting period were high, a result of the application of strict criteria governing misbehaviour. The proportion of minority ethnic pupils excluded in the period was high in relation to their numbers in the school. Senior staff are monitoring this and taking appropriate steps to address the issue. This year, so far, the exclusions are fewer in number.

## Exclusions

### *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	1,079	39	1
White – Irish	7	0	0
White – any other White background	20	1	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	23	3	0
Mixed – White and Black African	15	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	11	1	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	17	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	17	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	24	3	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	9	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	21	3	0
Black or Black British – African	31	3	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	7	2	0
Chinese	2	0	0
Any other ethnic group	7	0	0

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

15. Relationships in the school are excellent. Pupils work well together in different groups, sharing resources and collaborating very well. They work and co-operate with adults exceptionally well. The school's Christian ethos is exemplified in the way that staff and pupils treat one another. Pupils comment on how caring and helpful the teachers are. The vast majority feel this is a good school to be at. There was no evidence of racial harassment or bullying during the

inspection and all pupils spoken to confirm it is not a problem for them, although a number of pupils responding to the questionnaire expressed concerns about bullying.

## Attendance

16. Attendance is very good; in the year 2002/3 it was 93.8 per cent which is well above the national average for secondary schools. In the same period, unauthorised absence, at 0.3 per cent, was below the national average.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.9	School data	0.3
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

17. Absences are followed up very well. The school's processes quickly establish why pupils are absent or late and encourage parents to substantiate the reasons. Detailed examination of attendance data is carried out on a regular basis to identify any patterns in the absence of individuals or groups and concerns are rigorously followed up. Attendance records are kept and maintained correctly. Despite the numbers of pupils travelling long distances to school using public transport, punctuality is good.
18. The school does much to promote pupils' personal development. The climate of care emerges from the shared values and sense of community and leads to each individual being personally valued. The school's Christian ethos is central to its character. It has worked with Bristol University to make its values more explicit in everyday life. They are actively promoted through its Values in Practice (ViP) programme, its enrichment provision, its vertical tutor groups, through which older pupils support younger ones, and its overall caring ethos. The ViP programme promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness through debate, analysis, contribution and involvement. The admission policy enables a number of pupils from other faiths to join the school each year in order to facilitate cultural and spiritual diversity.
19. There is outstanding provision for the spiritual development of pupils. The distinctly Christian ethos informs policy, planning and practice. Pupils take their responsibilities seriously, engaging in a very good range of worthwhile voluntary and charitable work. All areas of the curriculum embrace these ideals and, as a result, all pupils understand and uphold the school's strongly-held values. The history, geography, religious education, business studies and music departments make especially strong contributions to the pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural development.

## Sixth form

20. Sixth-form students respond very well to the high levels of trust which the school places in them. They feel that they are treated as adults, and most are willing to take responsibility for their work and actions, and to engage positively with others. They are articulate and open in conversation, and relate well to one another and to the staff of the school. In lessons there is a friendly yet workmanlike and committed atmosphere. Attitudes are very positive throughout the student body, and only a very small minority of students causes any concern about their attitudes to school, their attendance or the progress they are making. Attendance is very good. The school has very clear procedures for checking and recording attendance, and for ensuring that individual students keep up with their work. Occasionally, and often because of the nature of the school site, students are not as punctual as they might be in arriving at lessons.
21. The school provides very well and in a wide variety of ways for students' personal development. The vertical organisation of the school brings older students into daily contact with their younger peers, and they make a significant contribution to younger pupils'

development through acting as mentors and sports coaches. There are numerous opportunities for post-16 students to become involved in helping others: the requirement in the sixth-form personal development programme to make a contribution to the community involves students in a range of activities within the school and in the wider community. Strong involvement in church activities and in the active Christian Union contributes well to the spiritual development of those students who wish it. There are many opportunities for sixth-form students to organise their own activities with the support of the school. Students are consulted as a matter of course on issues which affect them.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. Its impact is seen in the effective learning throughout. The teaching is good overall with a significant proportion of very good lessons. A broad curriculum is provided with very good extra-curricular and enrichment provision. The care of pupils is strong; the links with parents are good and those with the community are very good.

### Teaching and learning

The teaching is good overall and is often very good in the main school and the sixth form. In Years 7 to 11 only three unsatisfactory lessons were seen and a high proportion were good or very good. Some outstanding teaching was also seen during the inspection. Strong subject knowledge, enthusiastic and dynamic teaching, very good involvement of pupils and thorough marking of work contribute significantly to the standards achieved.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have high expectations of pupils throughout the school and they enjoy rising to the challenge.
- Relationships between teachers and pupils are warm and characterised by mutual respect.
- The pupils' positive attitudes make a significant contribution to their learning.
- The National Key Stage 3 Strategy is used effectively to develop the teaching.
- The needs of different groups of pupils, including the gifted and talented and those with special educational needs, are well catered for.
- Assessment, guidance and support for sixth-form students' progress are very good. In the main school, while assessment has improved significantly since the last inspection, it is not used consistently in all subjects to support learning.
- There is very thorough attention to the requirements of the public examinations in the main school and the sixth form.

#### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 179 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
4 (2%)	53 (30%)	89 (50%)	30 (17%)	3 (2%)	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.*

### Commentary

22. The teaching is strongest in Year 11. It is particularly good in history where talented and highly skilled teachers engender real analytical thinking and high quality work. There is also a high proportion of very good teaching in science and geography. In all other subjects the teaching is good overall with a healthy proportion of very good lessons throughout.
23. Key features of the effective teaching are:

- Planning which takes into account the learning needs of pupils with different attainment levels; for example in history, geography and Years 10 and 11 in science.
  - Learning tasks which interest and challenge pupils, for example, in English and modern foreign languages where they increase the achievement of the highest attainers.
  - High quality questioning which requires pupils to think for themselves, synthesize new concepts with previous understanding and explain their reasoning, for example in history and mathematics.
  - Focused attention to examination requirements, including analysis of grade and level criteria with pupils and use in assessment to enable them to see what they have to do to reach higher grades. This is the case in almost all subjects.
  - Helpful marking of work with clear feedback on quality and how to improve.
  - High expectations of concentration and quality of work combined with lively pace and good humoured interactions between teachers and pupils – found in most lessons.
24. The school's ethos contributes to the effective learning. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect and commitment to working hard and 'doing as well as you can'. Relationships are very good; pupils speak of caring teachers who readily help them when they need support, whether academically or pastorally. The vast majority of pupils want to learn, they engage enthusiastically in lessons and apply themselves well to tasks. They enjoy rising to a challenge and, indeed, expect to be intellectually stretched and pushed beyond their 'comfort zone' in lessons. They debate and discuss with vigour and are quick to respond to opportunities, both in and outside the classroom.
25. The school has made effective use of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy to develop teaching and promote learning. Good use is made of strategies to develop literacy across the curriculum and opportunities to develop numeracy skills are being taken, where appropriate, in some subjects. The teaching approaches of the strategy are being utilised well in many subjects, particularly the use of the three-part lesson, with effective objective setting and plenaries. The development of teaching and learning styles has been the focus of staff development and very good guidance on key strategies is provided in the staff handbook. Strengths in the teaching are shared and three advanced skills teachers (ASTs) support other teachers, in this school and beyond.
26. Where the teaching is occasionally less successful, it is most often because expectations are not high enough, activities do not challenge sufficiently and the pace of learning falls. This can affect particular groups, such as the higher attaining pupils in art and design for example. Very occasionally, the lesson objectives are not sufficiently clear to pupils, for example in mathematics, and key learning is not understood.
27. The assessment of pupils' work is good overall, having improved considerably since the last inspection. Most of the marking provides good quality analysis of pupils' work and identifies how it can be improved. Assessment criteria are communicated well to pupils, enabling a growing practice of pupil self-review and agreed target setting. Whole-school performance targets are identified effectively by senior managers and agreed with staff and governors. A centrally held computer-based system has been introduced to provide accurate and detailed comparative data in support of assessment and the tracking of pupils' progress. This has enabled early and effective intervention at pupil and group level to tackle potential underachievement. However, there are inconsistencies in the use of assessment to focus and improve the learning in subjects. The school is now data-rich and some departments are more confident and active than others in using it. Further work is required to promote more effective use. Key aspects include: reviewing the amount of data to identify the elements which are most useful to teachers for tracking progress and focusing teaching, as well as clarifying the expectations of subjects regarding its use.
28. There is good attention to the needs of gifted and talented pupils. Most subjects cater well for their needs as part of the mainstream teaching, having targets for attaining the highest grades in examinations and a good level of challenge in lessons. Occasionally, these pupils are not



stretched sufficiently, as indicated above. Enrichment activities provide well for them, in physical education and music, particularly.

29. There is effective provision for pupils who are at an early stage in learning English. Specialist teaching of English as an additional language (EAL) is provided, as well as extra support in some of the lessons for these pupils. Overall, the teaching and learning are good. The teachers maintain good relationships in their classes and provide a secure environment for the pupils with EAL to acquire English. However, currently, some pupils could benefit from extra language support to build confidence and develop their understanding of more advanced subject terminology. Specialist staff, supplied by the local education authority, provide good support within the limits of the school's time allocation. This includes advice, assessment of new arrivals, induction of staff, audit of schemes of work, direct teaching, support at parents' meetings as well as support for underachieving pupils of African and Caribbean heritage. Underachievement due to behaviour problems is tackled effectively using a structured programme aimed at improving motivation. The provision is very well managed by an assistant headteacher who monitors all aspects of the school's provision. However, whilst the school has used its own funds to top up the local education authority provision which was reduced from last year, the current support is not enough to meet all the needs of the pupils with EAL.
30. The teaching of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is effective and is reflected in the good progress they make. Small-group sessions (for which pupils are withdrawn from lessons) are well planned and meet pupils' needs effectively. The amount of subject time they miss is kept to a minimum and the sessions are benefiting them by increasing their skills in literacy and numeracy. The assessment of pupils using 'Successmaker' and the literacy intervention programmes is very thorough and clearly shows how much pupils have gained from the experience. The ASDAN course in Years 10 and 11 provides good help and support which raise pupils' self esteem; their work is well monitored and assessment is thorough. Learning support assistants (LSAs) are well deployed to support pupils with statements of special educational need as well as a number of other pupils on the SEN register. In geography, history and mathematics, for example, the LSAs receive copies of lesson plans which improve the quality of the support. However, in some lessons, work is not sufficiently matched to the needs of the pupils. Good individual education plans provide teachers with strategies and advice and are carefully monitored and reviewed each term.

### **Sixth form**

31. Teaching in the sixth form is almost invariably good, and in a third of the lessons seen during the inspection it was very good or outstanding. Dynamic and sometimes inspirational teaching motivates students to learn and helps them to achieve high standards. Most lessons are characterised by careful and often imaginative planning and effective strategies for involving students in their learning. In many subjects there are good opportunities for independent learning. ICT is used well in some areas of the curriculum for research and study support, although in some subjects there could be more planned use of computers and media. Teachers have good subject knowledge and experience of teaching at this level, consequently the work is carefully geared to the demands of what the examination requires and to helping the students maximise their potential in terms of ordering and presenting their learning. Expectations of pupils are generally high. Only in a very small minority of cases does the teacher's lack of experience or depth of subject knowledge have an adverse impact on the progress which students are able to make.
32. A very good feature of the teaching and learning process is the quality of assessment of students' work. A key element of this is the way teachers analyse students' individual strengths and weaknesses in order to show them how to improve. In most subjects, students identify, through self-evaluation, the areas where they need to improve and set themselves targets to address them. The school has very good procedures for keeping students on track and ensuring that they meet or exceed their targets. Tutors make an extremely effective contribution to the review of students' progress, and students themselves appreciate the help

and support they receive from both subject teachers and tutors, which contribute very positively to their progress.

## **The curriculum**

The school offers a very good curriculum overall in the main school and the sixth form. There is good emphasis on values and personal development and strong extra-curricular provision.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum is broad and significantly enriched by very good extra-curricular provision, particularly in relation to spiritual development, sport and musical activities. A very wide range of subjects is offered in the sixth form.
- Support for learning out of lessons is strong.
- The school works closely with partner institutions to provide suitable courses for all pupils and students.
- Very good provision is made for pupils' and students' personal development.
- The ViP programme, which includes personal, social and health education (PSHE), careers and work experience, is good, although there is some variation in the teaching quality.
- Very significant improvements have been made to the accommodation since the last inspection, but there are still weaknesses which impact on learning and make it unsatisfactory overall.

### **Commentary**

33. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that is weighted toward the academic subjects and meets the needs and requirements of its pupils and the wishes of their parents. The teaching time for all subjects of the National Curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is at least adequate. The curriculum is designed to allow flexibility in subject grouping arrangements. Provision is made for pupils to study a second modern foreign language in Year 9.
34. A full range of academic subjects is offered at GCSE, including a second modern foreign language. The timetable is constructed so that pupils can study for the maximum number of GCSEs appropriate to their ability. Pupils for whom a wholly academic 'diet' is not appropriate can opt for more vocational courses and, as with all pupils, very good guidance is provided to ensure choices are appropriate. The school makes good use of links with other institutions to provide suitable courses if they cannot be provided on site. The work-related curriculum is well developed with a one-week work experience programme supported by subject-based work-related learning, especially in technology (see section on Other Specified Features later in the report).
35. The taught curriculum is very well supported by a strong extra-curricular programme of activities, notably in sport, musical and other activities, including the out-of-hours support for learning. Spiritual extra-curricular activities are well represented with popular Christian Unions. Homework, coursework and before-school clubs are held for pupils as part of the overall strategy to improve skills and provide support for pupils. The clubs support pupils who have difficulty meeting course or homework requirements. Subject teachers use the club to help pupils who have been absent and missed key work. Other pupils attend voluntarily, appreciating the support provided.
36. There is a well-structured programme in place to support the personal, social and health education of pupils through the ViP programme. This is integrated with the teaching of citizenship and the further spiritual development of pupils. Whilst it is a good programme, it is relatively new and there is still some variation in the teaching quality. Careers education is effective, with good resources and working relationships with the external Connexions service.

37. Pupils with SEN in Years 7 to 9 receive the same curriculum diet as all pupils in those years. The various intervention programmes used to improve literacy and numeracy are having a positive impact on their access to all subjects. Pupils are not withdrawn from practical subjects, as they often make good progress in these areas. In art and design, pupils with SEN are doing as well as their peers and sometimes better. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are able to follow a less academic curriculum and have the opportunity to participate in the ASDAN course, which includes work experience and community involvement.
38. The accommodation is unsatisfactory overall. The school roll exceeds the appropriate capacity of the buildings by 200 pupils; this causes cramped conditions in corridors and unsuitable rooming for some lessons. Several areas of the curriculum have unsatisfactory accommodation, including modern foreign languages, music and physical education. Others suffer from a shortage of storage areas or departmental bases. Since the last inspection, considerable improvements have been made, notably the improved accommodation in art and design, English, SEN, ICT and design and technology. The library has been considerably expanded, and physical education facilities have been improved. Most of the worst defects noted in the report are now resolved, and plans for a new sixth-form centre to be complete by September 2004 should remove the remaining deficiencies. This represents a considerable achievement by the school.
39. Whilst the school is well staffed by and large, it has experienced staffing difficulties in recent years (see the Leadership and Management section later in the report). Resources are generally good. They are very good in science and ICT, and satisfactory in English and SEN. The school has an above average number of computers per pupil and, in most departments, the supply of textbooks and materials supports the needs of the curriculum.

### **Sixth form**

40. A broad curriculum is offered to students, with a wide range of subjects offered for study. There are clear policies on entry requirements for courses and the school offers courses for those students who do not yet meet these, but wish to extend their success at GCSE and follow an academic curriculum. The school works closely with consortium partners to offer post-16 courses off site if the appropriate course cannot be run on site. In order to ensure an even wider choice of subject combinations, some courses are run in the period immediately after normal school hours.
41. The taught curriculum is very well supported by extra-curricular activities, notably in sport, musical and spiritual activities. All students in Year 12 are required to give a minimum of ten hours commitment to the community, either in school with younger pupils or in the community at large. Some students, in responding to the questionnaire, indicated that the school provides insufficient enrichment opportunities; these views were not substantiated by the inspection findings.
42. The core programme provides very well for students' personal development, acquisition of key skills, guidance and preparation for higher education and for their development of study skills.
43. Students with special educational needs are well supported and follow a full academic and extra-curricular programme. Good provision is made for students whose English is at an early stage of development.
44. Overall, the staffing is appropriate for the courses offered and teachers' qualifications and experience match the requirements of the courses they teach. However, some relatively inexperienced teaching in mathematics has slowed students' progress.
45. The accommodation is unsatisfactory. There is inadequate study and leisure provision for the students. Some lessons are taught in unsuitable rooms, and in some cases, some way from

the main part of the school. There are plans to improve the accommodation radically in the near future. Resources are generally good.

## **Care, guidance and support**

The inclusiveness of the school, care of pupils, their welfare, support and guidance are all very good. Pupils' involvement in the work and development of the school is good, in the sixth form it is very good. The level of care, guidance and support provided for sixth-form students is very good.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The care and welfare of pupils, and the provision of support, advice and guidance are very good.
- The school is very inclusive, catering very well for pupils' needs.
- Transition processes, from primary schools through key stages and into work or further study, are very good, including those for pupils with special educational needs.
- The provision of additional support for identified pupils is very good.
- Some pupils feel their views are not always heard and responded to in a positive way by the school and that the pupil councils could be more effective.
- Child protection arrangements are very good.
- There is a health and safety concern regarding a piece of machinery in design and technology.
- In the sixth form, students' involvement in school life is very good.
- The tutorial system is very effective in providing guidance and support for students.
- The programme for personal development at sixth-form level is very good.
- Procedures for setting and tracking progress towards targets are very effective.

## **Commentary**

46. Pupils are cared for very well throughout the school. All members of staff are well aware of pupils' specific needs, and strategies are devised and implemented to support and advise pupils. Such support can be provided from within the school or from outside agencies. The great majority of pupils confirm there is an adult they can speak to when they are in need of help. The pupils have access to their tutors, house teachers, counsellors, chaplains and the learning mentor for skilled and impartial support and guidance.
47. Academic target setting based on assessment informs pupils well about how they can improve, and engages them in the process. Pupils with special educational needs are supported very well and they are involved in setting their own targets. Careers education is well received by the pupils, as part of the ViP programme, which is designed to provide health, welfare and social education. All pupils participate in a well-organised work experience programme in Year 10 which is supported by local businesses.
48. Membership of the whole-school and house councils, as well as the worship committee, gives pupils opportunities to be involved in the management of the school and to air their views. Pupils' opinions are taken into account and, where possible, policies are changed or matters altered to meet their requests; a recent example was the change to the school uniform. Nonetheless, a significant proportion of pupils, in their responses to the inspection questionnaire, expressed frustration with their apparent lack of ability to influence school policies and management. Currently, the school council is working to bring about improvements in the quality of the school's dining provision.
49. The transition processes into and out of the school and from key stages to next phase are very good. Health, medical and welfare support for pupils are very good, as are arrangements for child protection. The local area child protection committee requirements are fully met.

50. Arrangements for health and safety are very good, although the inspectors have drawn a concern in design and technology to the attention of the school. There is a strong commitment to ensure the health, safety and welfare of pupils and arrangements are very thorough. Pupils are cared for very well if they need medical aid. In matters of care, health and safety, members of the governing body and the staff regularly review and update policies and apply considerable time and skills to this aspect of the school. Any concerns are handled well, all statutory requirements are met and there are very good risk assessment procedures in place, including those for visits and trips.

### **Sixth form**

51. Central to the care which the school provides for its older students is the programme of study, activities and expectations which all students are required to follow. It provides well for a range of aspects of personal development and key skills, and gives very good advice and support for students' next steps, including university application and the gap year. At present, there is insufficient built-in provision for careers advice for students not intending to carry on with their studies, but there are plans to increase the provision in the future. The students' questionnaire indicated that they would find such advice advantageous.
52. Arrangements for supporting students' progress and attainment are strong. All students are given targets as soon as they move into Year 12, and these are kept under close review throughout their stay in the sixth form. Minimum expected grades are based on the student's performance in the GCSE examinations and represent the level at which the student is expected to perform. Each student also has a challenge grade which denotes the level which the student can reach with effort and hard work. In all subjects there are regular reviews of progress towards targets, and the students are asked to evaluate their own performance and set themselves targets for improvement and for attaining where possible the aspirational targets set. The system is very effective in involving students in a clear appraisal and understanding of where they are at. Students interviewed all felt that the system was of benefit to them, and appreciated the availability of their subject teachers to give help and guidance when problems arise. The view, expressed by some in responding to the inspection questionnaire, that students do not have an adult who knows them well and to whom they can speak when in need of help, was not borne out by the inspection.
53. Students meet regularly with their tutors to discuss their progress. These meetings are very helpful and promote good learning. Procedures for tracking student attendance, ensuring that they present work on time and are keeping up with their targets, are very secure, and there is a scale of actions leading to agreed contracts for improvement where students fall behind on their responsibilities. The sixth-form team meets monthly to discuss progress and to identify any trends in the work and progress which may be developing. An indication of the effectiveness of the system is the very small numbers of students who reach the final stage of the procedures.

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

The school's links with parents are good, the links with the community and other schools and colleges are very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents have very positive views of the school, the headteacher and staff.
- Good information is provided to parents about the curriculum and how to help their children at home.
- There are very good links with primary schools, receiving colleges and other local schools, which provide many benefits for pupils.
- Written reports on pupils' progress are very good and show parents clearly how well their children are progressing and how they can improve.

- Communication with parents of pupils with special educational needs is good and well documented.
- The links with the local community are very good.
- Parents feel the annual consultation evenings to discuss their children's progress are not well organised.

## **Commentary**

54. Parents and carers have very positive views of the school and, as a result, it is oversubscribed. The school works well with parents, encouraging them to provide support through the parent-teacher association and by helping their children at home. The parents are positive about the efforts made to smooth the settling-in process for their children. A good range of information is provided regarding the curriculum and how they can help their children at home. The parents feel that the school responds well to their suggestions and concerns.
55. Written annual reports for parents are very good; they inform parents what their children, know, understand and can do, and suggest to pupils how to improve further. The pupils are able to include their own targets. The reports also inform parents where their children are in relation to national expectations and include all the information required by law. There is one opportunity each year for parents to meet staff formally to discuss their children's progress. The organisation of this important event has been criticised by parents who find it difficult to get around to see all their children's teachers in the time available. This is largely owing to the challenge of accommodating the high numbers of parents who attend. Other opportunities to visit the school are praised, including curriculum events, open evenings, church services, performances and informal fund-raising events organised by the school and the parent-teacher association. There is a parent prayer support group.
56. The good relationships with parents and the knowledge of pupils by tutorial and house staff provide a good basis for a supportive and helpful dialogue. The school's learning mentor makes a significant contribution to the support available for the parents of pupils who may be experiencing difficulties with their learning. The parents of pupils with SEN are consulted well about the individual education plans (IEPs) for their children, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Parents are able to support children who find difficulty meeting homework targets by allowing them to attend the school's homework club.
57. Links with other schools and colleges are very good. Very effective induction arrangements with partner primary schools ensure that the school is well informed of the achievement and support needs of pupils about to enter Year 7. As a result, these pupils settle down quickly. The school has built up very strong links with local partner establishments as a result of its Beacon status. Support has been provided for other secondary schools that find themselves in challenging circumstances. The school is developing links with local colleges to extend the curriculum opportunities for students.
58. The school's links with the community are very good. There are very strong links with the local church and diocese. The good links with the careers advice provider, the ViP programme and the work-experience programme provide good opportunities for pupils to experience and talk about the world of work. In addition, the school organises many visits and visitors as part of faculty activity, to contribute to assemblies and the ViP programme. Very good relationships established with outside agencies help to maintain the high level of care and support for pupils. Pupils make significant contributions of service to the community, for example coaching sports, participating in church services, charity events and in helping community organizations through the 'Wheels Project'. Local sports organisations make use of the facilities, and pupils and students join in many inter-school sporting competitions, enjoying much success. The productions and performances are very successful, enabling many parents and visitors to enjoy the work of the school.

## **Sixth form**

59. Parents and students are very positive in their praise of the sixth form and support the institution very well. They extol the virtues of the sixth form, apart from the lack of accommodation for students and their lack of access to ICT. The acquisition of an additional building is eagerly awaited and will further cement the very good links enjoyed with the community by providing increased access to sixth-form places. The sixth form is joined by students from other schools and provides a wide range of academic courses and a very full extra-curricular provision. Parents receive good quality information on the school's activities and the students' progress.
60. Students benefit from many of the strong links enjoyed by the school, including those with the local education authority, the church and diocese as well as local businesses and all the support agencies.
61. The students are encouraged to contribute to the community by contributing at least ten hours of community service that includes working in hospitals and with local charities. They are able to contribute to the community through the ASDAN award scheme. The students take part in a variety of extra-curricular activities that include church activities, prayer groups, debates, music, art, theatre, sport, adventure activities, exchanges and foreign visits that included Kilimanjaro, Morocco, Nicaragua and the USA. They are able to visit other educational establishments, businesses and industry. Visitors have enriched the students' experience and have dealt with careers as well as extra-curricular and curricular subjects. Students are able to go out into industry or business for an additional week of work experience in Year 12, if appropriate. The Connexions service is regularly in school to provide advice for students with career and course choices, as well as advising on gap years.
62. Links with other schools and colleges are very good and include collaborative arrangements with the City of Bristol College to enable access to courses that the school could not otherwise provide. College staff teach computing in the school and similar arrangements with other institutions are being considered in order to widen the provision. Students also attend drama workshops in the local theatre. Links between the school and universities are strong and, with the very effective systems for dealing with the UCAS process, the proportion of students achieving their planned higher education courses is high.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management of the school are strong. The school's Christian ethos permeates all aspects of its work. There is a clear and successful drive for improvement. The school achieves very good value for money.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leaders are very well informed, skilled and active in seeking improvement.
- The governors are very effective in supporting the work of the school.
- The management is very good but there is a need for further development of monitoring and evaluation processes by subjects.
- Despite some recent difficulties, the school is staffed by well-qualified teachers, and staff development is taken very seriously. Support provided to other schools is also strong.
- Financial planning is very thorough.
- The sixth form is led by a strong team of very experienced teachers.
- Strategic planning for post-16 provision is very good.
- There is careful, detailed management of student performance.

### **Commentary**

63. The headteacher provides excellent leadership in which the vision for the school's Christian ethos and a strong focus on improvement are key elements. He is very ably supported by a senior leadership team, which is well informed and effective, and very committed and knowledgeable governors. There is also very effective leadership and management by other key staff in the school. For example, the leadership is excellent in history; and it is strong in several subjects including science, design and technology, ICT, media studies and psychology. The school's effectiveness has been recognised in the award of a number of national accolades in recent years, including Beacon status, achievement awards and Sportsmark. More recently, the school has acquired Specialist Humanities College status.
64. Being cognisant of its many strengths and privileges, the school seeks to 'give back' to the educational community in several ways. Through its involvement in the Excellence in Cities (EiC) initiative, its Beacon status and outreach work by ASTs, it supports a number of local schools who are seeking to raise achievement. Through a DfES Pathfinder Challenge initiative, it is also supporting a Swindon school which has successfully emerged from 'special measures' during the period of support. The headteacher is chair of the local secondary heads group and one of the deputy heads is chairing the group providing the strategic curriculum plan for new city-wide post-16 developments in Bristol. This work brings gains to the school too in that leaders are very well informed about improvement strategies and what constitutes effective teaching and learning.
65. Keeping staff up to date and developing their skills are given a high priority. The leadership incentive grant (LIG) is used well, for example to develop middle managers' leadership skills, using the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) 'Leading from the Middle' programme.
66. The school has Investor in People status. Performance management is taken seriously, with very good procedures in place to secure the focus on improvement and the link to the school development plan. Every aspect of the professional development of staff is driven by the whole-school and faculty development plans which are reviewed annually. Team leaders have a budget to ensure that faculty as well as school and individual training needs are met. Because of the success of a very good programme over recent years, teachers are now able and confident in leading in-house training; a growing feature of staff development. The induction of new staff is very good. The headteacher observes their teaching and they receive very good support from faculty team leaders. The induction programme for newly-qualified teachers is also of high quality. An excellent handbook ensures that all statutory requirements for newly-qualified teachers are met.
67. The school sensibly limits its excellent contribution to initial teacher training to around 16 trainees each year. The course is led by a professional tutor who is an AST and each trainee is linked to an associate tutor in the faculties. Excellent interactive links with Bristol University and other training institutes secure an excellently planned and tightly run programme that secures all statutory requirements and widens the trainees' professional experience. They have a high regard for the contribution made by the school to their training and a number of them have been successful, subsequently, in obtaining posts there.
68. Strategic planning for improvement is very good, with clear focus on the key elements of standards, teaching and learning and personal development. The effectiveness of actions taken are carefully reviewed on an annual basis. The governors are well informed and have a good grasp of the school strengths and development areas. The monitoring of teaching and learning has been largely in the hands of the senior team until recent years. Currently, the heads of faculties are developing their skills in lesson observation and other monitoring activities and, although much is effective, there is some inconsistency in quality across subjects. Plans to allocate time to heads of faculties specifically to undertake these activities next year are wholly appropriate.



69. Good recruitment and selection procedures, approved by governors, ensure there are sufficient numbers of well-qualified teachers. However, there has been increased turnover in recent years and the fields for replacing staff have been 'thin' in some cases. Currently, music has an acting head of department. Whilst there are sufficient mathematics teachers overall, some do not have sufficient experience to meet the needs of post-16 teaching. There has been a good response by the governors to the 2003 national agreement on workforce reform with constructive agreements with unions in place. Additional support staff have been appointed this year and more are planned into the budget for next year. Trained parent invigilators now supervise examinations. In this way, teachers are being given more time to do essential administration and to address the demands of the school development plan.

## Financial information

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

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4,374,455	Balance from previous year	144,953
Total expenditure	4,423,643	Balance carried forward to the next	68,413
Expenditure per pupil	3,522		

70. Financial planning is very effective. The budget is well monitored; minor items raised by the auditors have been addressed. The principles of best value are appropriately applied to key decisions. Judicious budgeting has enabled the school to make considerable improvements to the accommodation since the last inspection, including new buildings and refurbished accommodation in several areas. Although there is still great pressure on the accommodation and it remains unsatisfactory in parts, the new sixth-form building which is planned for next year will improve things substantially for all. There has also been a very significant investment in ICT resources which has greatly improved the provision in this area. Extra grants and funds acquired through the school's Beacon status, and involvement in initiatives, are used well. Although the school's expenditure per pupil is above average as a result of these extra funds, given its strong outcomes, it provides very good value for money.
71. The governors have a good range of expertise which is well deployed across the committees. There are high expectations of governor involvement. They act as very well informed critical friends to the school. All governors participate in at least two committees, for which there are clear terms of reference. The governors have good processes for monitoring the school's effectiveness and clear understanding of its strengths and development priorities. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. High standards have been maintained and the key issues have been addressed very well, by and large.

## Sixth form

72. Leadership of the sixth form is strong and is a major factor in the success of this area of the school's performance. There is a shared commitment to improvement and a determination to succeed. Leadership is characterised by a clarity of vision, a clear sense of direction and very good strategic planning which have seen the number of students increase markedly in recent years. A further large increase in student numbers is planned over the next period. The school is a networking centre for the training of A-level teaching staff and will shortly play a key role in the overall post-16 provision for the City of Bristol Campus.
73. The management of the sixth form is very good and based on a very sound structure which exemplifies the importance which the school places on this phase of education. The director and his assistants and the assistant head, who is the link to the senior management of the school, are very experienced and skilful in dealing with older students and know their students well. Duties and responsibilities of the management team are well defined and combine with

the sixth-form tutors to provide an organisation which gives extremely good support to the needs and aspirations of the student body. The managers of the sixth form make up a very effective team.

74. The students live up to the clear policy of trust with which the tutors and senior staff treat them. Relationships are very good and guidance and advice are always available, either through regular meetings with tutors or through more formal channels and the personal development and key skills programme. But alongside the warm relationships there is real rigour which ensures that all students are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Procedures for tracking attendance on this very complicated site and for checking that students are up to date with their work are very good and have contributed to high levels of attendance in class and a good work rate on the part of students. There is a very good system for ensuring that students remain on track towards their targets and clear procedures to guide them if they begin to lose ground. The senior management team of the sixth form meets on a monthly basis to review the progress of all students and to identify trends of performance before they become significant.
75. Leadership and management of subjects and teaching programmes in the sixth form are very good. Teachers use their subject knowledge and examination experience very well to gear teaching and learning syllabuses to what the students need, both in the acquisition of knowledge and skills and in terms of strategies for learning. In some cases, teachers observe one another teach in order to share expertise and ensure continuity and a cohesive approach, and this benefits students' learning. Where there is insufficient monitoring of teaching, however, there is an impact on the quality of learning which is provided.

## **OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

### **Work-related learning**

76. The overall quality of provision for work-related learning is good, many aspects are very good. It is very well planned and organised in conjunction with a range of partner institutions in the local community. It makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning about work and from work. It helps to prepare them for work and career development. The provision is effective and usually well matched to pupils' needs, through work experience in Year 10, work-placed learning in Year 11, Young Enterprise in Year 12 and through the Connexions programme and paid school employment opportunities in the sixth form.
77. In addition to the wide range of work related learning offered through the ViP programme, as well as many post-16 vocational subject areas, business studies, leisure and tourism, health and social care, design and technology and ICT, the school also makes provision for work-related learning in Years 10 and 11. Some pupils, for whom a wholly academic diet is not appropriate, benefit from a vocational programme which provides opportunities to gain valuable accreditation of wider skills through the ASDAN awards, the Wheels Community Vehicle Programme credited by OCR, and individual work placements. The school has developed good links with the City of Bristol College. Pupils value the provision highly. The quality of their work is very good, they keep excellent written and photographic records, gain confidence and enjoy opportunities to work in the leisure and tourism industry. Most have plans to go on to apprenticeships, college or employment. Plans are currently in hand to further develop the vocational provision in conjunction with City of Bristol College.

# 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

- Well above average GCSE results show that pupils achieve well by Year 11.
- Good teaching and very positive attitudes from pupils lead to above average work in Years 7 to 9 and well above average work in Years 10 and 11.
- Good leadership ensures that planning throughout the department is effective.
- Good improvement has taken place since the previous inspection.

#### Commentary

78. Pupils join the school with above average levels of attainment. By the end of Year 9, attainment is still above average which represents satisfactory achievement. By Year 11, the attainment of pupils is well above average, indicating that achievement is good. The 2003 results in national tests at the end of Year 9 produced above average results. This was against the upward trend of recent years when pupils have achieved well above average results. Test results for 2003 in mathematics and science were well above average. In English, girls generally achieved better results than boys in line with the national picture. GCSE examination results for 2003 in English and English literature were well above the national average. In both subjects the proportion of pupils achieving A\* and A grades was higher than it is nationally. Almost all of the lowest attaining pupils in Year 11, including those with special educational needs, achieved GCSE grades in both subjects, indicating good achievement. Against national gender figures, girls performed comparatively better than boys in English but less well in English literature. Pupils from all ethnic backgrounds achieve well.
79. Pupils in all years are confident speakers and attentive listeners. Good vocabulary and expression characterise much of their work. They participate well in class discussions and collaborate effectively in small groups. Reading skills in Years 7 to 9 are above average. Pupils read aloud fluently and quickly grasp the meaning of what they read. Regular English lessons in the library and quiet reading sessions in lessons help pupils to become enthusiastic about books. Written work across a wide range of tasks is accurate and well organised. Good awareness of purpose helps pupils to write appropriately, as seen in their publicity leaflets outlining for visitors the main attractions of Bristol. Books and folders show that most pupils work hard. By Year 11, pupils analyse complex texts with assurance. They understand how writers achieve effects and are able to detect implied as well as stated meanings, as seen in the very good detailed notes on John Steinbeck's language in 'Of Mice and Men'. Good research, including use of the Internet, is evident in much work, such as that on the background to Tennyson's 'The Charge of the Light Brigade'. Lower attaining pupils are equally enthusiastic about literature. The writing of the highest attaining pupils is fluent and controlled, showing sophisticated use of a range of language devices.
80. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are flexible and challenging to meet the needs of even the highest attaining pupils, who consequently do not lose interest. This helps to explain why such pupils are gaining so many more of the highest grades in GCSE examinations than they were at the time of the previous inspection. The needs of the lowest attaining pupils are also well served in small classes. Here, teachers use materials and strategies to which their pupils respond with the same enthusiasm and determination that characterises the work in

other classes. Occasionally, lessons for pupils in Years 7 to 9 lack objectives or are not sufficiently demanding. This is because new programmes setting out what pupils must learn in each year are not yet complete. It is mainly for this reason that pupils achieve less well in Years 7 to 9 than they do in Years 10 and 11. A notable strength of all teaching is the drive to involve pupils actively in their learning through paired and group work. Teachers expect pupils to work well independently and they do. The pupils have consistently good attitudes in lessons and invariably behave very well. Marking is exemplary, giving clear but detailed indications of strengths and weaknesses and telling pupils where they are in relation to national standards. As a result all pupils learn more effectively.

81. The leadership of the department is good. Teachers work well together in a pleasant environment for learning. Initiatives to help teachers share good practice are working well. Already teaching has improved and is more consistent across the department. Since the previous inspection, overall improvement in English has been good, principally in the areas of teaching and leadership of the department.

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

82. Standards of literacy are above average. Pupils in all years are usually confident speakers in most situations. Reading is very well developed. Pupils read their own books regularly in English lessons. They make very good use of the school library for private reading and research. Library-based literacy initiatives involving the English, history and religious education departments are having a positive impact on pupils' reading and writing. All pupils readily meet the demands for reading in all subjects. Across the curriculum pupils' standards of writing are above average. In science, pupils are encouraged to develop language skills through drama and a wide range of written work. In modern foreign languages pupils are also encouraged to write at length for different audiences and emphasis on grammar increases their knowledge about language. Teachers in geography and history give pupils advice on gathering information from books and the Internet. In design and technology, physical education and music, a good focus on the use of correct terminology and research activities help pupils to build up their language skills. The school has made good progress across all subjects in its strategy for raising levels of literacy throughout the school.

### **Modern foreign languages**

#### **French and German**

Provision in modern foreign languages is **good**.

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

- Standards are above average and improving.
- Good teaching is leading to good achievement overall.
- Very good leadership and good management mean that the department is improving.
- Nearly all students in Years 10 and 11 study a modern foreign language.
- There is some inconsistency in teaching.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.

#### **Commentary**

83. Exam results in 2003 were well above average in French and above average in German. Girls achieved better than boys but the difference in performance was not as great as is the case nationally. Pupils did not perform as well in French and German as they did in other subjects but, again, the difference was not as great as it is nationally. These results are particularly commendable because the proportion of pupils entered for the examination is well above the national average. There has been a considerable improvement in results since the last inspection. Work seen during the inspection confirms that standards are above average.

Achievement is good for all pupils at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. From the beginning of Year 7, pupils are encouraged to extend their oral and written responses, using a wide variety of vocabulary and structures, and to use dictionaries to extend their knowledge of vocabulary so that they make good progress in all four skill areas. An emphasis on grammar means that pupils learn to use language independently. In one Year 7 class, for example, not only were all pupils enabled to learn the names of a large number of animals, they were also expected to produce extended sentences using relative clauses to describe them. By Year 9, as a result, higher attaining pupils use the three main tenses with confidence and produce imaginative and varied written work. Most pupils understand the perfect tense and use it with reasonable accuracy. Gifted and talented pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress overall. In Years 10 and 11, higher attaining pupils demonstrate a high level of writing skills using a wide variety of vocabulary and expression. They manipulate language effectively, write well from memory and are learning to write for different audiences. There are differences in performance within year groups but this is due to different expectations by teachers.

84. Teaching and learning are good overall, with examples of very good teaching. One excellent lesson was also observed during the inspection. Pupils learn well overall because relationships in classes are almost always good. Teachers plan their lessons well with clear objectives, which are shared with pupils, and set work that builds on previous learning. In many lessons a good variety of activities ensures that pupils are always fully involved. Learning is good because most teachers have high expectations. They set challenging lesson targets which are linked to GCSE criteria and National Curriculum levels so that pupils' expectations about what they should achieve are raised, both in the short and long term. All teachers have a good command of French and German but, in some lessons, the language is not used in a challenging way, so pupils do not develop their listening skills. However, in one Year 9 lesson, not only did the teacher use French effectively, she also expected pupils to use it for basic communication in the lessons. As a result, these pupils had very good oral confidence. Pupils also learn well because most are clear about how to improve their standard of work owing to the regular and thorough assessment. Marking is very effective because teachers regularly point out the strengths and weaknesses of pupils' work and give them targets for improvement. Where teaching is less successful it is because expectations are occasionally not high enough.
85. Leadership in the department is very good. There is a clear sense of vision and a strong, mutually supportive team of teachers. Management is good. The department evaluates its performance effectively with good support from the senior leadership team. Measures for monitoring and evaluating teaching are beginning to be effective in addressing inconsistencies in practice. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The department has made very good progress since the last inspection. Having been one of the weakest faculties its standards are now in line with others that have continued to make good progress.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards of attainment are well above average, and the achievement of the pupils is good.
- The teaching is good overall but should be more consistent through the department, particularly in using the National Key Stage 3 Strategy techniques.
- Assessment of the pupils' progress is good.
- The department is well led and managed.

### **Commentary**

86. Standards in mathematics are well above the national average in all years. In the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003, the results were well above average with a large proportion of

pupils attaining the higher levels. When the results are compared with those of pupils who attained similar results in the Year 6 tests (at primary school) three years previously, they are average overall and the proportion of those achieving the expected Level 5 is well below this average. In the GCSE examinations in 2003, the results were well above the national average. These results have been broadly sustained for several years

87. The achievement of the pupils from their entry into the school up to Year 11 is good, although some groups of pupils are not achieving as well as they might. This includes some of the lower attaining pupils, whose misconceptions are not recognised and corrected quickly enough. The achievement is good because of the overall quality of the teaching, and the pupils' very good attitudes to learning. Most of them work hard during lessons, support each other well and maintain a high level of concentration on the task in hand. The pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers, due to their inclusion in the appropriate, slightly smaller, sets and additional personal support from their teachers, as well as from learning support assistants. Standards of presentation of work vary from very good to unsatisfactory, and many pupils would benefit from clearer guidance on how to organise their work so that it is better suited to the requirements of revision.
88. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teaching is always at least satisfactory, and in around half the lessons, is good or better. In the best lessons, the pupils are challenged to think for themselves and to solve problems. Relationships with the pupils are good, enabling a calm, orderly atmosphere where pupils listen intently, are free to contribute and get down to work quickly. Teachers' explanations of key processes are clear and accurate, and these lessons have a range of different activities to keep the pupils interested and ensure they use the time well. In some lessons individual whiteboards are used very effectively to ensure that all the pupils are fully engaged, and the teacher is able to correct pupils' misconceptions quickly. However, this is not yet standard practice in the department and, in too many lessons, the teacher has no systematic way of checking understanding, so some pupils are left not knowing how to proceed. In lessons with weaknesses, the pupils are not given a clear context or purpose for the work, and so they learn the mathematical processes without really understanding the underlying concepts. In these cases, the pupils forget the methods, or confuse different issues when returning later to the problems.
89. ICT is not yet fully integrated to enhance learning, although the department has now invested in the equipment to begin to address this issue. Assessment of the progress of individual pupils is good. The department is well organised, and the leadership of the head of department is good, although strategic planning linked to detailed analysis of performance is not yet fully effective, and schemes of work do not yet provide an adequate context for inexperienced teachers to plan effective lessons. The department is well resourced.
90. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Standards have been maintained and assessment procedures are better. The pupils continue to achieve well.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

91. Standards of numeracy are well above average overall. The mathematics department fills a useful role as consultant to other departments, advising them on numeracy-related issues, but has yet to tackle this in a systematic way. As a result, there are some inconsistencies in the approach to numeracy across the curriculum. However, during the inspection, good examples were seen of the way that standards in numeracy support learning in many areas of the curriculum. This was particularly the case in science, where algebra and statistical methods are extensively and effectively used, and teachers are willing to provide additional teaching of these topics if they feel that it is required. Other good uses of numeracy were seen in design and technology, geography and ICT.

### **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **very good** overall.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good leadership provides clarity of vision, and has created a very effective team that produces well above average results in national tests year on year.
- Teachers' subject knowledge, effective planning and use of a wide range of teaching methods lead to most pupils achieving well.
- Pupils are not often challenged to make predictions and form hypotheses, and teacher questions are not always directed to keep all pupils on task.
- Pupils are not involved enough in self-evaluation and target setting relative to national test and examination levels.

### **Commentary**

92. The results in the 2003 National Curriculum tests in Year 9 were well above average for both the expected Level 5 and the higher Level 6 and above. When the results are compared with those of pupils who had similar prior attainment in Year 6, they are average. The proportion of girls who attained the higher Level 6 and above improved markedly on previous years so that girls are now achieving similar results to boys. In 2003, results in the GCSE double award were well above average and in the single award were above average. Whilst boys did better than girls, results for both were significantly better than for boys and girls nationally. All of the above results meet realistic targets set for science and represent good achievement.
93. Standards seen during the inspection were well above average. In most lessons pupils achieve well. They enjoy science, are well motivated and respond very well to being challenged. Most pupils achieve their learning objectives. There is little difference between the achievements of girls and boys. Most pupils listen well, are focused throughout and record their work very well. Standards of written work are not as good for boys as girls. By the end of Year 11, most pupils are confident speakers when answering questions. Higher attaining pupils, including those identified as being gifted and talented, work very accurately, ask good questions, and answer questions in depth. They bring very good prior knowledge to new situations, can make predictions and complete extension exercises well. They are not well practised at design and forming hypotheses. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs achieve well in response to the good support they get from their teachers and support assistants, despite there being insufficient joint pre-planning by these parties. There was occasional lack of concentration by some pupils during the inspection but most pupils work well together and want to do well. Positive attitudes to work and behaviour are helping pupils' achievements, as are their good levels of literacy and very good levels of numeracy and ICT.
94. Teaching and learning are good overall and often very good. In a very good lesson in Year 7, a caring teacher used challenging questions and much encouragement and praise to bring about exceptional understanding of mass and weight for such a young class. In a Year 11 lesson, assertive teaching made good use of a variety of time-limited activities to maintain very good pace and challenge throughout. Pupils made very good progress, extending their knowledge and understanding of gravity and acceleration. Very good planning and lesson structure, based on assessment data, are features of all lessons, including planning for the teaching of cross-curricular skills. Learning objectives are shared very well with pupils at the beginning of lessons but rarely referred to thereafter. Good learning activities support pupils studying for GCSE examinations at higher and foundation levels. In Years 7 to 9, pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. All teachers set and mark homework regularly, though not consistently, and pupils find the diagnostic and supportive comments useful. Some excellent assessment data is not shared sufficiently with pupils for them to be partners in their achievements and skilled at self-evaluation.
95. The leadership and management are very effective. Leadership is clearly focused on raising the achievements of all pupils. There is a strong and very well-motivated team that seeks to

achieve faculty and school priorities. Rigorous self-evaluation of the work of the faculty triggers appropriate action. Teachers are very well deployed, and regular monitoring of teaching and learning identifies appropriate staff development needs. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. The key issues for action from the last report have been very well addressed. Very good use of ICT now supports teaching and learning and pupils' independent studies. Data handling and the use of data is greatly improved and is still developing. The high standards at the last inspection are at least maintained and teaching is improved.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good leadership and management.
- Diagnostic assessment of pupils' abilities sets high targets.
- Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic.
- Gifted and talented pupils are not challenged sufficiently in lessons.

### **Commentary**

96. Strong leadership has resulted in a curriculum that suits the needs of all pupils in the school. As a result, most pupils are attaining standards above the national average, although gifted and talented pupils could be challenged more. Teachers of ICT are knowledgeable and enthusiastic. They are aware of the pupils' abilities and are always encouraging them to work with pace and depth. Some of the material that is being used is very good. Pupils are skilled in using ICT in all subjects. In Years 10 and 11, more able pupils are taking a GCSE short course, others are following a Key Skills course that reinforces the good learning that has taken place in Years 7, 8 and 9.
97. In 2003, teachers' assessments of Year 9 pupils showed that most were working at levels above national standards with 50 per cent gaining Level 6 or higher. The results in the GCSE business and communication systems course were in line with the national average.
98. Pupils achieve well in lessons due to the fast pace and high targets set by teachers. Pupils are enthusiastic and skilled in using their ICT skills. They work hard, both independently and collaboratively. All pupils are aware of their progress and their attainment levels and are encouraged to aim high. Many are able to work independently, thereby gaining skills beyond expectations and they have a very good knowledge and understanding of ICT.
99. Pupils' attitudes are usually very good; they clearly enjoy ICT and are complimentary about their teachers. Much of the teaching is at least good and some is very good. The teachers have established strong working relationships with pupils, resulting in a rapid pace of learning. Their enthusiasm encourages pupils to produce very good work.
100. Leadership and management are strong. The department is very well organised and is well focused on improvement. There is an effective strategy in place to ensure that the many improvements that have been made recently will continue. The schemes of work are thorough; they include many strong features, such as clear lesson objectives, effective 'mapping' of the National Curriculum and clarity about use of resources. The key purpose of the department is to provide facilities and opportunities for pupils to build their skills up to levels that will enable them to use ICT independently and effectively. Senior staff, the network manager, technicians and ICT teachers have excellent working relationships. The network and equipment are well maintained. The technicians are very competent and respond rapidly to the needs of the department.



101. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Standards have improved and National Curriculum requirements have been met in terms of delivery in all key stages, including the sixth form. ICT is now well co-ordinated and assessment is rigorous. ICT provision now includes well-equipped and maintained suites of networked computers, improving the learning environment.

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

102. There is good development of pupils' ICT skills in subjects across the curriculum. The teaching and learning have improved owing to the strong programme of staff development and monitoring of standards. Nonetheless, further development is required in mathematics, business studies and music. There are many opportunities for pupils to take part in computer help sessions and computer clubs which they clearly appreciate and use well. There are 317 networked computers, giving a computer to pupil ratio of one to four. This is well above the national ratio for secondary schools. The networked computer suites are in high demand and are sufficient to meet this demand.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **very good**.

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

- The achievement of pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, is very good.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the examinations.
- The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development within the subject is strong.
- Pupils' attitudes are positive and they are keen to learn.
- There is effective provision for citizenship education and literacy development.

#### **Commentary**

103. Teacher assessment at the end of Year 9 in 2003 showed standards to be well above the national average. This represents good achievement, pupils having entered the school in Year 7 with above average standards. At GCSE in 2003, the results were well above the national average, both in terms of grades A\*-C and of the highest A\*/A grades. Pupils' attainment in geography is higher than the average of their other subjects. Girls' attainment is higher than the boys', but the gender gap is narrower than is found nationally and less than it was at the last inspection. The GCSE results show very good achievement by the pupils, the high standards reached by the end of Year 9 having been maintained and extended. Standards seen during the inspection confirmed the well above average picture.

104. Teaching is good overall and much is very good. Scrutiny of work confirms the good quality of teaching and learning over time which results in the pupils making good progress. Opportunities to extend pupils' spiritual, moral and social development are used very well. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, pupils studying globalisation showed understanding of, and concern for, the impact of decisions made by shoppers and retail managers on the lives of farmers and factory workers in less economically developed countries. Where the teaching is very good, teachers provide stimulating lessons and engage pupils fully in the tasks. Well-planned activities, clearly-stated objectives and desired outcomes, combined with good relationships and pace, ensure pupils' learning is very effective. Activities are carefully designed to ensure challenge is high for all pupils. Where occasionally the teaching is less effective, the purpose of the lesson and the pupils' understanding of the required outcomes are

not clear enough. Too many short activities lead to less considered thinking and some inattention.

105. The department is well led and managed. The head of department has clear vision for the subject. There is strong focus on improvement. An effective team of teachers has been developed. Data from assessment is used well in the setting of targets for improvement, but is not always used as effectively in planning work. Consequently, initial exercises in some topics have low challenge, not building well on the understanding pupils already have from previous studies. For example, in a Year 8 lesson about desert ecosystems, above average pupils were not challenged by activities that required description. Further, in a Year 9 class, although the tasks set allowed pupils access to higher levels, there was insufficient time to enable pupils to study the topic in depth. The contribution to pupils' understanding of citizenship is good. Resources to support learning are good. Teacher-produced resources, including interactive learning materials, are very effective in giving pupils additional materials to support learning. There has been good improvement overall since the last inspection.

## History

Provision in history is **excellent**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- A key strength of the department is the high quality of leadership and management which leads to high standards.
- Planning is of a very high order, providing clear pathways for innovative teaching.
- The teaching is very good. It makes use of a range of methods that are driving up standards at all key stages.
- Assessment practice is designed to give pupils a very clear idea of what they are trying to achieve and of how well they are doing.

### Commentary

106. In 2003, the GCSE results were well above average. Pupils performed better in history than in any other subject in the school.
107. By the end of Year 9, standards are well above average. For example, pupils can make perceptive evaluations of different kinds of sources dealing with trench conditions during the First World War. The achievement of most pupils is very good but, occasionally, lower attaining pupils are left behind by the excessive pace of teaching. By the end of Year 11, standards are still well above average. For example, lower attaining pupils in Year 10 can discuss the relative value of evidence from official statistics and political cartoons dealing with the causes of poor living conditions in London in the 1840s. An equivalent group of pupils in Year 11 can use counter-factual reasoning to demonstrate the relative importance of 'push' and 'pull' factors causing homesteaders to settle on the great plains – reasoning normally associated with top GCSE grades. The learning needs of pupils of differing abilities are carefully considered and specific learning activities are separately defined for both lower attaining pupils and those deemed gifted and talented. This, combined with teaching that constantly challenges pupils to think 'beyond their means', ensures that rapid gains are made by pupils of all abilities across the key stage. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is therefore excellent.
108. The quality of teaching is very good overall and occasionally excellent. It is more consistently good in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9, where fast pace or over-elaboration can occasionally lead to a loss in pupil interest. High quality planning provides a framework within which a number of very talented teachers are encouraged to express themselves and try out new ideas. These take a variety of forms in the classroom – card sorts, small-group work, role-play – but their common aim is to enable pupils to think critically about, and ask questions

of, historical situations and problems. In Years 10 and 11, this produces levels of conceptual understanding, particularly in respect of causation and change that can only be described as remarkable. Very good use is made of initial stimulus material – mainly visual – to ‘hook’ pupils’ interest for the main lesson activity, whilst careful use of small-group activities enables all pupils to make a valid contribution. Pupils respond positively to good teaching, expressing their ideas with confidence and wanting to do well. A key feature of teacher intervention for raising standards is the quality of marking, which is particularly precise and helpful in Years 10 and 11. This builds upon an innovative approach to assessment in Years 7 to 9 that enables pupils to know what they are trying to achieve in assessed work and to assess their own performance against National Curriculum criteria. In this way, pupils effectively create their own task-specific mark schemes, validated by teacher response.

109. The department is outstandingly well led and managed. Leadership is reflected in the head of department’s clarity of vision, well-developed craft knowledge and deep understanding of the educative possibilities of the subject. Management is characterised by meticulous planning and the development of support mechanisms within which rigorous, innovative teaching methods can flourish. There are no management activities that are not concerned directly with the raising of pupils’ achievement.
110. Standards have improved well since the last inspection, as has the use of ICT across all key stages.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

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

- The good and sometimes very good teaching which extends pupils’ knowledge and understanding.
- The good standards achieved by all the design and technology GCSE examination courses, particularly textiles.
- The very good leadership and management of the department which enable good teamwork and planning.
- The good use of assessment to inform pupils and to guide curriculum planning.
- The high level of interest and motivation demonstrated by pupils.
- The use of display as a resource is not well established to identify expectations in designing and making.
- The technological experience needs to be extended for pupils in Years 7 to 9.

#### **Commentary**

111. Attainment at the end of Year 9 in 2003 was well above the national average, based on unverified data. In lessons, standards are above average and achievement is good. There is a good balance between designing and making activities. However, pupils have limited experience of aspects relating to mechanisms, structures and computer-aided design and manufacture.
112. GCSE results in 2003 were above the national average in food, graphics and resistant materials and well above in textiles. In lessons, standards are above average. Achievement is good, and sometimes very good. Coursework folios are good and well presented graphically. Many pupils make very good use of ICT for coursework. However, there is limited use of

computer-aided design and manufacture in GCSE coursework, necessary to raise standards and gain higher grades.

113. In lessons, the quality of teaching and learning is good and often very good. Where lessons are good or better, objectives are shared with pupils, expectations are high and the work is challenging. Where a lesson is satisfactory, pupils are not sufficiently challenged to demonstrate their knowledge and progress is often slow. In most lessons, teachers work very well with pupils which contributes to their good progress and the high level of interest and motivation. Pupils with learning difficulties are well supported and teachers ensure good progress is made with their learning.
114. The leadership of the department is very good. There is good teamwork with a clear ethos and commitment to improvement. The management of the department is also very good, teaching is monitored well and there is careful planning. Assessment practice is good in Years 7 to 9 and used well to monitor progress and attainment. Underperformance is quickly identified. In Years 10 and 11, assessment is thorough, providing good information to pupils on their progress and actions for improvement. Good practice is shared between staff to raise standards, although this does not include all GCSE coursework. The department has identified key development issues to raise achievement. Overall, accommodation is good but in need of review to maximise the use of space. In the workshop area there is not adequate safe provision for the use of machinery to prepare materials. Storage is a problem for GCSE coursework, particularly in the workshop areas. The resources for teaching and learning are good. The quality of display varies across the department but, overall, it is not used effectively as a resource for teaching and to identify standards. Good use is made of industrial links to extend the learning and experience of pupils. There has been good progress since the previous inspection. Lesson objectives are shared with pupils. Monitoring is well established and schemes of work have been developed.

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

### **Drama**

115. A lesson in drama was sampled. Drama is taught as an optional GCSE subject for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
116. By Year 11, pupils attain average standards. They build satisfactorily upon their standards at the beginning of Year 10. GCSE examination results for 2003 were just above the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving the highest grades was below average. In a Year 11 lesson, pupils worked well in groups on scripted or improvised performances in preparation for external assessment. Collaboration between pupils was good but standards of performance were variable. A good focus on self-evaluation helped pupils to develop their performances but progress was restricted by pupils' lack of understanding of the criteria for success. Outside the classroom, pupils have satisfactory opportunities for learning in regular dramatic productions. The well-equipped new drama studio has a positive impact on learning. Satisfactory leadership and management of the subject contribute to the sound standards of drama in the school.

### **Art and design**

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

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

- Standards are high because of good teaching and learning.
- The curriculum is broad and balanced. It includes a good range of two- and three-dimensional study, ICT and design-based work.

- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are very good.
- More opportunity could be provided for pupils to document their self-review in the subject.
- Incorporating into lessons extended tasks for above average pupils.

## Commentary

117. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average. This has been part of a trend of continued improvement over recent years. By the end of Year 9, pupils have above average knowledge, skills and understanding in the subject. This represents very good achievement over time given the inconsistencies in subject knowledge at the beginning of Year 7. Pupils with special educational needs and those pupils who come from a low starting point in the subject also achieve very well over the key stage.
118. Pupils work competently in a wide range of media and processes, covering a broad spectrum of art and design. Good quality work is evident in areas such as printmaking and design work as well as in painting and drawing. Work of high quality using mixed media is evident in Year 9. For example, Year 9 pupils producing packaging design based on Art Nouveau and Pop Art sources showed strong design qualities and a confident approach to using colour and texture. In general, pupils show a developing facility in their use of techniques and processes across the key stage. The pupils' written research and self-review are not always as well developed as their practical work. Pupils show a high level of interest in the subject and their behaviour is very good.
119. By Year 11, pupils' skills are well developed and they produce work of high quality. Their attainment is well above the national average. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is good. Pupils are skilled in the use of a good range of media and confidently apply their knowledge of techniques and processes to individual pieces. Sketchbooks and research material of very high quality are developed in Year 10. Pupils show a mature and articulate approach to study and self-review. These skills are not as well developed in all classes, however.
120. Pupils achieve well because of good teaching. The teachers engage the interest of pupils and plan lessons carefully to address their needs. There is scope, however, for introducing greater challenge to the higher attaining pupils. Pupils have a very positive attitude to learning and show a high level of interest in the subject. Teachers have a good command of the subject and of examination requirements. Clear teaching and learning objectives are shared with the pupils. Teachers use a good range of strategies within their teaching, including drawing and demonstrating. Equally well developed is the use of whole-class discussion to explore and analyse works of art and design. Pupils respond enthusiastically to these opportunities and confidently engage in such discussions. Assessment is thorough. Teachers have a good understanding of individuals' strengths and weaknesses and the pupils are given a clear idea of their progress in the subject. The marking of work is accurate and diagnostic.
121. The department is led and managed well. Schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 provide a well-structured teaching programme. New aspects have been introduced to further develop ICT in the subject. Extra-curricular opportunities enable pupils to enjoy the subject in workshops and visit programmes. There has been good progress since the last inspection; the department has successfully addressed the issues therein. The accommodation has been transformed by new buildings and now provides an environment of good quality. Resources are also good, enabling a broad range of art and design practice, including ICT and three-dimensional work, to be provided.

## Media studies

Provision in media studies is **good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how key media present messages.
- The teaching is effective but needs to be developed further for lower attaining pupils and for those with special educational needs.
- There are shortcomings in the accommodation which impact on the teaching.

### **Commentary**

122. Although there have not been any GCSE results yet, as the subject was recently introduced, standards seen during the inspection were above average. Pupils have a good understanding of media terminology, which enables them to comment in detail on the ways in which film and television present messages and values. Girls and boys perform equally well. More able pupils show personal insight in their judgements, while lower attainers, including those with special educational needs, reach average standards. The achievement of pupils is good. They make good progress in producing their own media texts, and very good progress in analysing texts that they study.
123. Pupils learn well because of effective teaching. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan most effectively. Pupils are developing confidence and independence in their learning. They speak and listen well. During the inspection, they were enthusiastic in identifying the messages and values which convey cultural identity and how Britishness is portrayed in different television programmes. Higher attaining pupils make good progress because they are challenged well to develop their ideas. Pupils with special educational needs learn well as a result of skilful support. All pupils benefit from the thorough arrangements for self-evaluation and personal target setting, which enable them to take responsibility and improve their own work.
124. The leadership and management are very good overall. The course has been very well established through dynamic, inspiring leadership which provides excellent role-models to other staff and to pupils. The department is well managed, with clear documentation and a good staff development programme. Schemes of work are well planned and reviewed. The accommodation is barely adequate for a subject which is expanding in numbers. Resources are good, with modern computers, editing facilities and sufficient cameras.
125. Media studies has been introduced at GCSE since the last inspection. There has been good progress in establishing it; there is now a need for further development so that pupils' analytical skills and understanding become more fully assured.

### **Music**

Provision in music is **good**.

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

- The good leadership of the department promotes strategies for improving standards.
- The range of instrumental teaching is very good and the quality of extra-curricular music is excellent.
- The schemes of work are not sufficiently developed to meet the needs of all pupils.
- There are not enough opportunities to use ICT, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- There are weaknesses in the accommodation which affect learning.

### **Commentary**

126. The GCSE results in 2003 were in line with the national average but have been consistently well above average for the past few years. The number of pupils opting for music in Year 10 is very healthy indeed. The teacher assessments for Year 9 in 2003 showed standards to be well above average. Evidence from the inspection is that, overall, pupils perform above national expectations. This represents good achievement. In a Year 9 lesson seen during the inspection, pupils demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of musical vocabulary through a useful starter activity. They worked well in groups and pairs, composing music for a short story. In a Year 8 lesson, pupils worked productively on compositions using ragas. In a Year 10 lesson, pupils performed to each other confidently with some playing to a very high standard.
127. The department has a strongly inclusive ethos, with all groups able to access the music curriculum. Boys and girls respond and achieve equally well overall. Schemes of work are still under development and there is a need to take account of the abilities of the most and least able when planning practical classroom tasks, especially in Years 7 to 9. There are limited opportunities to use ICT in music. Assessment is good, by and large. Further refinement is necessary so that assessment criteria are specific to each unit of work. Appropriate systems for monitoring and recording of pupil assessments are being developed so that a more secure basis for teacher assessment can be provided at the end of Year 9.
128. The standard of teaching is good overall. In the best lessons, teacher subject knowledge is very good. Relationships between pupils and teachers are very positive. Lessons are well planned and have suitable pace. Where the teaching is less successful, activities in practical sessions are not always sufficiently well organised to ensure progressive development of skills and understanding. Homework is not set consistently to reinforce and extend classwork.
129. The leadership and management of the department are good in most respects. The acting head of music has made good progress in a short period of time to address shortcomings in schemes of work and assessment procedures and the department is well placed to raise standards further. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall. There are still difficulties in the accommodation, however, which affect the teaching.
130. A clear strength of the department is the range and quality of its extra-curricular provision. An increasing proportion of pupils learn instruments and there is an impressive range of performing and enriching experiences for pupils. These include termly concerts, recitals, music for school worship, workshops with distinguished musicians and choir tours. The number of pupils involved in junior and senior choirs, gospel choir, rhythm and blues orchestra and various instrumental groups is very healthy. As an example, the department is currently preparing for a performance of Bach's 'St John Passion'. These activities and events greatly enrich the cultural and musical life of the school.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good curriculum planning provides a very clearly defined programme of study.
- The quality and provision of extra-curricular activities are very good.
- Excellent use is made of ICT to enhance learning.
- Attitudes and behaviour are very good.
- Assessment, recording and moderation procedures require improvement, including the provision of opportunities for pupils to be involved in self- and peer-assessment.

### **Commentary**

131. The curriculum programme is well structured and makes good use of the on-site facilities. However, the school playing field is some distance away and time lost in transportation has a

negative impact upon standards. The introduction of a GCSE course in Years 10 and 11 and the inclusion of a Junior Sports Leader Award (JSLA) provide very good opportunities for a large number of pupils. The delivery of the GCSE course within the 'frame' of the core physical education programme, however, prevents pupils from attaining the higher standards because of lack of time. The extra-curricular activities programme provides very good opportunities for pupils to attain high standards. Excellent use is made of ICT to raise pupil awareness of the quality of their own and others' performances. The structure of the assessment and recording of pupil attainment is well established, although opportunities for pupils to be involved in their own assessment are not fully in place.

132. Standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are broadly in line with the national expectation in the core curriculum. Achievement is good in the main. Pupils demonstrate extended sequences in gymnastic activities and apply both offensive and defensive strategies in basketball. The assessment and moderation procedures currently being used are wholly not accurate.
133. Teaching is of a good standard overall with some very good teaching. A variety of approaches are used to promote learning, although a greater range of strategies to improve pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding could be introduced. Learning objectives are always clearly identified and teachers make very effective use of questioning techniques. Similarly, many good opportunities exist for the observation and evaluation of performances, although more structured opportunities could be provided. Pupils with special educational needs learn and progress as well as other pupils and there is very good provision for talented pupils.
134. The leadership and management of the department are good. They promote, in particular, high standards in extra-curricular activities and curriculum planning. Formal risk management procedures are very good and regular risk assessments take place, promoting safe practice. The process for monitoring lessons and providing staff development are good. Strategies for the development of the examination programme and literacy are both good.
135. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory overall. The GCSE and vocational (JSLA) courses have been introduced and an all-weather surface has been provided. There are shortcomings in the accommodation which affect the learning.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **Business studies**

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

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

- Standards are well above the national average and have improved significantly since the last inspection.
- The overall quality of teaching is good overall and often very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Pupils lack sufficient opportunities to develop independent investigative research and discussion.
- Assessment data is full and comprehensive but is not consistently used to ensure pupils know what they have to do to improve their grades.

#### **Commentary**



136. The GCSE results have improved significantly since the last inspection when they were judged to be in line with the national average. For the last three years the results have been well above the national average. In 2002 four-fifths of pupils achieved A\*-C grades, and in 2003 three-quarters of all pupils achieved the top A\*-C grades. The slight drop last year was largely caused by some temporary non-specialist teaching. In the last three years all pupils entering the examination have attained pass grades and a significant proportion have attained a grade about that predicted.
137. The present pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve standards in lessons and written work which are well above average. Coursework produced by pupils in Year 11 shows a good understanding of key business concepts and a real capacity to use these to think through each stage in the process of launching a new market product. This includes deciding the most appropriate type of business organisation, conducting some excellent market research for their product and analysing and evaluating the evidence to develop a market strategy. At each stage in the process pupils take great care to justify their decisions by considering other options available to them and the consequences. Some of the coursework is at a very high standard indeed and achievement is very good: in a Year 10 lesson they quickly grasped the importance of pricing strategies and applied this knowledge to how firms use a range of pricing tactics in different product markets. Standards of problem solving are especially high and pupils can readily relate the theory to local issues such as how a Tesco store tried and failed to deploy destroyer-price tactics. All pupils achieve very well.
138. The quality of teaching is good and often very good, promoting effective learning. It is based on strong subject knowledge and very well-judged lesson content that offers a range of learning opportunities which are well matched to the needs of all pupils. Teacher presentation is stimulating, with excellent questioning which sets a challenging learning pace, to which pupils respond enthusiastically. As lessons proceed, pupils' understanding and accuracy improve significantly in response to increasingly difficult activities. Pupils are fully focused on their learning, enjoy the challenges and particularly welcome the opportunities to apply their knowledge to case studies. In one lesson, pupils examined the impact of legislation on employment and considered the implications for business of racial and sex discrimination law, equal pay and minimum wage legislation and issues of health and safety at work. Working very effectively in groups they presented a number of hotly debated case studies. Citizenship, social, cultural and moral issues are all very well integrated into lessons. Coursework is especially well tutored and assessed. Opportunities for independent investigative research and discussion have improved since the last inspection but need further development.
139. The subject benefits from the leadership of a very experienced and dedicated member of staff with an excellent background in the subject and a strong network of links with colleagues and businesses in the area. There are clear departmental priorities linked to the school development plan. The department has a very open approach to self-evaluation, including pupil feedback questionnaires on lessons and learning; it is well aware of its deficiencies and is working hard to improve. Schemes of work are excellent and have been carefully developed to promote well-structured learning opportunities. Good assessment data is provided. However, the use of assessment to inform pupils about their individual strengths and weaknesses, so that they clearly understand what they can do to improve their grades, is not well developed.
140. Pupils have many opportunities to test their business skills outside school; Year 10 pupils are helping to write business plans and collect money for small businesses in Africa working for children in need. The department runs very successful Youth Enterprise programmes and works closely with Business Dynamics to run business conferences for sixth forms.

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

The school's ViP programme includes personal, social and citizenship education for all pupils. It is a well-developed programme which also includes careers education as well as work-related learning. Careers education is supported well by Connexions and the good resources available in school.

Outside speakers are invited into school to provide any additional information pupils may require. The ViP programme is still bedding in and teaching has yet to be fully monitored to ensure consistency of teaching and presentation. Outside speakers are involved, including the emergency services and health professionals.

## **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Effective structure and organisation of subject delivery as part of the ViP programme.
- Good matching of specialist staff to subject specification.
- Uneven quality of delivery of citizenship through subjects.

### **Commentary**

141. Overall, pupils attain good standards by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Achievement is good overall. By the end of Year 9, pupils have a broad knowledge and understanding of topical events. For example, those in Year 8 can discuss issues associated with refugees and asylum seekers; those in Year 9 are familiar with global trading patterns and with the notion of fair trade, whilst elements of the ViP programme – for example a police talk on vandalism – help to develop in pupils a sense of community responsibility. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 gain experience of responsible political activity through membership of the school council, or by writing letters on asylum to a local newspaper.
142. By the end of Year 11, pupils develop a good knowledge and understanding of the work of the United Nations (UN). Through use of ICT, they can research case study UN projects and assess their effectiveness, drawing general conclusions about why the UN has more impact in certain situations than in others. When asked, pupils in Year 11 show a good understanding of what citizenship is, and why it is important to study it. Pupils also show good awareness of multicultural issues and there is an active Amnesty Group.
143. The quality of teaching is good overall, but varies between satisfactory and very good. Teaching is well planned and resourced, and effective use is made of outside experts to give presentations on certain specialist topics. It is occasionally held back in Years 7 to 9 by lack of specialist knowledge, or by lack of challenge in the methods used. Assessment is a strength of the provision. In Years 7 to 9, this consists of an innovative system of pupil self-assessment, supported by levelled assessment tasks at the end of each year. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are assessed by means of the religious education Edexcel examination and self-assessment. Formative assessment is carried out by history, geography and religious education teachers as part of the ViP rolling programme.
144. The leadership and management are very good. The key decision was to include citizenship in the ViP programme. This effectively ensures that it is taught in Years 7 to 9 as a separate subject by specialists from history, geography and the arts faculty, and in Years 10 and 11 by religious education specialists following an examination course in religious education and citizenship. Since there is a considerable amount of overlap between ViP and citizenship activities, citizenship benefits from association with, and contributes to, the core values that drive the school forward. It is acknowledged that subject-borne provision in Years 7 to 9 is less well developed. In some subjects – for example religious education, history, geography, design and technology, science and modern foreign languages – citizenship is explicitly integrated into schemes of work and deliberately referenced in teaching. In other subject areas, it is less well developed. Regular monitoring of the programme has occurred and this has identified the need to improve the range and quality of teaching in some citizenship lessons.



## 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
Art and design	8	100	96.1	50.0	48.7	90.0	85.1
Biology	21	100	91.6	52.4	36.3	85.7	74.1
Business studies	10	100	96.4	50.0	3.8	86.0	76.5
Chemistry	13	100	94.0	53.8	45.9	89.2	81.1
Communication studies	11	100	98.3	36.4	36.8	89.1	81.1
Drama	5	100	98.1	20.0	41.5	68.0	82.9
English/English language	13	100	98.3	46.2	36.5	95.4	80.1
English literature	12	100	98.5	58.3	43.7	93.3	84.3
French	11	100	96.2	54.5	46.1	89.1	83.0
Design and technology	12	100	95.3	33.3	35.5	85.0	76.5
Geography	16	100	97.1	62.5	40.5	92.5	80.9
History	29	100	97.1	48.3	41.0	86.9	81.2
Information and communication technology	6	100	89.1	33.3	22.4	73.3	64.1
Mathematics	21	95.2	93.3	61.9	52.2	95.2	84.7
Psychology	20	100	94.3	65.0	38.9	94.0	77.7
Physics	13	100	92.8	69.2	42.8	96.9	78.6
Religious education	7	100	96.3	28.6	44.0	71.4	82.2
Sociology	10	100	95.4	40.0	39.6	94.0	79.1
Sports studies	14	100	95.4	14.3	29.5	70.0	73.2
Health and social care VCE	9	94.7	90.1	10.5	16.3	67.4	62.5
Art and design VCE	6	100	89.0	50.0	27.4	90.0	69.4
Information and communication technology VCE	8	64.7	84.3	41.2	24.5	64.7	64.3

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was English and French. In addition, two lessons of German and a lesson in drama and theatre studies were sampled. Students achieve appropriate standards in German and attitudes and relationships are good. Drama and theatre studies are taught at the school but in conjunction with a local college, which provides most of the students in the class. Teaching was good and students are making sound progress. Work seen was at expected levels. GCE A-level examination results for 2003 were at the national average.

### English

Provision in English is **good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching helps students to enjoy lessons and make good progress.
- A-level results in English literature are well above the national average.
- Good management ensures that all students get the information and support that they need to achieve well in examinations.

#### Commentary

145. Substantial numbers of students take A-level English courses in either literature or combined language and literature.
146. Overall attainment in English is above the national average. Results in GCE A-level examinations vary from year to year. For the last two years English literature results have been well above the national average. Results in language and literature were at the national average in 2003 but well above average for the previous year. Work seen during the inspection was also above average. Overall achievement is good. In 2003, students in literature achieved better grades than those suggested by their earlier GCSE results. In contrast, about half the language and literature students in 2003 did not achieve the grades expected of them.
147. Students have very positive attitudes in lessons and work hard. They enjoy the frequent opportunities for working in small groups on challenging individual tasks. They make good progress as a result of this independent learning. Literature folders, in particular, reveal substantial amounts of well-organised work. Higher attaining students in both subjects write confident essays that have a clear line of argument. They show good control of language. Assertions are very well supported by quotations and other detailed evidence. Their levels of commitment are high. The work of middle and lower attaining students shows sound analysis of texts but less developed written responses. The notes of a few students in language and literature are not well organised and lack sufficient detail to provide a good basis for learning. Very good examples of writing were found in students' work on language and gender in Shakespeare's 'Othello'. Perceptive observations about Willy Loman in Arthur Miller's 'Death of a Salesman' such as: 'they can see that his deceit is just a trail to deeper unhappiness', characterise the high quality writing of the best students. Almost all students demonstrate good oral skills, as seen when Year 12 students delivered confident presentations to the class on their reading of Lewis Carol's 'Alice's Adventures in Wonderland'.
148. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers plan lessons carefully to ensure the maximum involvement of all students. As a result, students respond very well and few drop out during either Year 12 or Year 13. Teachers mark students' work with admirable care, offering detailed analysis of strengths and weaknesses and making valuable suggestions for improvement. All students have a clear picture of where their work stands in relation to examination criteria. Students are very happy with their courses, apart from feeling that activities outside the classroom, such as theatre visits, are too infrequent.

149. Good leadership and management help ensure that all students are well informed about courses. Teachers are clear about their shared responsibilities and work very well together. Improvement since the previous inspection is good because the standard of students' work is now higher, as seen from the increased proportion of students who achieve the highest A-level grades.

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

150. Standards of literacy in the sixth form are above average. Students have no difficulty in meeting the language demands in all subjects. They speak confidently and collaborate very well when working with others. They have very good understanding of complex reading matter and use research resources, such as the Internet, well. Written work is accurate and well constructed. Teachers in most subjects offer good literacy support for students through focus on the use of appropriate terminology. In music, there is good use of glossaries to build up vocabulary. English lessons often include an emphasis on an aspect of language. In modern foreign languages, attention to the detail of language helps students to build up their knowledge. In geography and history, good support for research and essay writing is also helping to improve students' language skills. Regular use of the school library by sixth-form students also contributes to the good standards of literacy.

### **French**

Provision in French is **good**.

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

- Teaching is good; good teaching strategies and relationships promote positive learning.
- Arrangements for assessing students' progress and supporting their work are strong and help them improve their performance.
- Students achieve well and standards are above average.
- Students' attitudes and application to their work are very good.
- There is insufficient planned use of ICT and broadcast media to support learning.

#### **Commentary**

151. Results in A-level examinations were above the national average in 2002, the latest year for which there are national statistics. Above average performance in A-level examinations had been sustained for the three previous years. Over half of the students entered for French in 2002 gained the highest grades A and B, and the average point score obtained was above the national average. The performance of male students was well above that of female students. However, in the 2003 examination, results were not as high: only one of the five candidates entered achieved a higher grade.
152. Currently, students are achieving good standards relative to their previous performance and, in Year 12, where most students are only in their third year of learning French, achievement in some cases is very good. Students are rapidly developing competent speaking skills and a good understanding of the language.
153. The teaching is good. Relationships are very good and teachers are skilful at gearing their teaching to the students' level. French is the medium of communication for almost all teaching and learning activities. Teachers prepare their lessons well, making appropriate reference to authentic texts, and devising imaginative and effective teaching strategies to develop students' understanding and giving them the opportunity to practise their language skills. The regular planned use of current affairs and other visual reports in French, and the presentation of research findings by students using PowerPoint-type presentations, could further enhance the

pace and impact of French lessons. At present, much of the work is print-based and, whilst presenting authentic French materials to support learning, lacks the immediacy of more visual approaches. Students who take up French as their second modern foreign language in the main school, and who consequently have less experience of the language when they undertake it in Year 12, need more opportunities to come into contact with authentic French spoken by native speakers – either on videotape or in the flesh – in order to develop their vocabulary and understanding of language patterns.

154. Students appreciate the very good support which they receive from teachers. Their work is carefully evaluated and very good advice is given on how to improve it. Students are required to evaluate their own work and to set themselves targets for improvement. This is a very effective process which enables them to be very aware of how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve further.
155. The leadership of A-level French provision is good within a closely structured and collaborative modern languages department. The two teachers work very well together as a team and have taken opportunities to watch one another teach in order to share expertise. The subject is well managed: teachers have undertaken appropriate professional training in order to improve their performance, and examination data are analysed in order to ensure that the work is well planned. Helpful handbooks have been devised to help students plan their learning and know what to expect from the course. The subject has moved on and provision has improved since the last inspection.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards of attainment are well above average in Year 13, and average in Year 12.
- Teaching and the achievement of the students are very good in Year 13 and for further mathematics students, and satisfactory for the AS-level students in Year 12.
- Challenging extra-curricular activities provide an excellent stimulus for the most able students.

### **Commentary**

156. Standards in mathematics in Year 13 are well above average. In the A-level examinations in 2002, almost two-thirds of the students obtained the highest grades A and B. Male students performed better than female students, as has been the case for some years. The results in 2003 were slightly better. In work seen during the inspection, standards were well above average in Year 13 and in further mathematics, and average in Year 12.
157. Students' achievement is good overall, but it is very good in Year 13 and in further mathematics. Many students are developing a good self-critical approach, and seek a deeper understanding of what they are doing. A minority of students are less confident and too readily reproduce standard forms rather than think problems through from first principles. Students work diligently: the quality of their effort and the accuracy of their work support their achievement.
158. The quality of teaching is good overall, and very good in Year 13, and in the Year 12 further mathematics class. This is a reflection of the qualifications and experience of the teams teaching in each year group. The most experienced teachers are very good mathematicians, with a very good degree of familiarity with the requirements of the syllabus, and an ability to present the learning as challenging sets of problems to solve. Solutions are examined to reveal underlying structures and help deepen students' understanding of key concepts; explanations are clear and precise. The less experienced teachers are competent mathematicians, in most cases able to provide the students with a clear model for tackling standard mathematical

problems, but lacking the experience to lead the students in developing a rigorous approach or to respond securely to their misconceptions.

159. The leadership of the department is good and management is satisfactory. Although most elements of leadership and management are good, there has been a failure to provide adequate monitoring and support for the new or inexperienced teachers who teach more than half the lessons in the AS-level course. Students' progress is very well monitored. The course is effectively organised, and most of the students are highly satisfied with the quality of the provision which they receive. Strong features include the module choices available to the most able students, and a range of challenging extra-curricular activities which stimulate in these students a real interest in the study of mathematics.
160. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. There has been an improvement in students' attainment in Year 13, but not in Year 12, and achievement in Year 13 is higher relative to students' prior attainment. However, the overall quality of the teaching has not been maintained owing to difficulties in recruiting teachers with sufficient experience of teaching at this level.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

161. Standards of numeracy and applications of mathematics are above average and enable the students to enhance their learning in many areas of the curriculum. In ICT, the students quickly grasp the principles of Boolean algebra, and statistical methods are used effectively in many subjects, for example in geography, French and history.

### **SCIENCE**

The main focus of the inspection was on biology. Chemistry was sampled, and one lesson was inspected. In the lesson observed, the quality of teaching was very good. Current standards in chemistry are above average.

#### **Biology**

Provision in biology is **good**.

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

- Standards are above average.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Leadership and management of the subject are good.
- Students are highly motivated.
- Some elements of teaching and learning could be better.

#### **Commentary**

162. A-level biology results in recent years have been above or well above the national average. In 2002, they were well above the national average. Students performed better in biology than in their other subjects. Results of 2003 were above the national average for 2002. The national comparison for 2003 is not yet available. Standards observed during the inspection were above average and achievement was good. The students carry out investigations thoroughly, for example on the effect of different colours of light on maggots and the effect of these and light intensity on the rate of photosynthesis.
163. Teaching and learning are good overall but lessons range from satisfactory to very good. For example, in one lesson, students made good gains in their knowledge and understanding of the use of pollen analysis to determine abundance of different plants and climate changes in



the past. The teaching had several strengths. Planning was thorough, structure was effective, the work was engaging and male and female students were challenged equally well according to their prior attainments. An interactive tutorial, involving the use of radio-linked laptop computers, developed very effective independent learning. Discussion at the start of the lesson was stimulating and highly engaging. Another lesson on the same topic was less successful because weaker planning did not make efficient use of lesson time and students' misconceptions were not dealt with to deepen their understanding of the data on climate changes in the past. Occasionally, some elements of teaching, such as sequencing activities, make less effective use of lesson time. Another highly successful lesson deepened students' understanding of the gross and microstructure of the kidney and of the physical principles involved in the process of ultrafiltration. Asking students to make a model of the nephron using Plasticine of different colours engaged all students well and promoted good understanding of this functional unit of the kidney. Other strengths of the lessons were: highly productive structure and differential challenge to all students to promote equality of opportunity for learning. Not all lessons have set time targets to improve the pace of learning.

164. Good leadership and management of the subject are bringing about improvements. The biology team works together very closely. Monitoring of students' performance is thorough. The curriculum is good. It has been developed to make it more engaging to students. It is enriched with visits, for example a week's ecology trip in Year 13, workshops and invitations to specialist speakers on a range of topics. Good quality resources and accommodation make a positive impact on standards. Teachers are very accessible and students appreciate their availability to deal with any problems that arise.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership and management are very good.
- All sixth-form students take accreditation assessments in ICT.
- Diagnostic assessment of students' abilities sets high targets.
- Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic.

### **Commentary**

165. Strong leadership has resulted in a curriculum that suits the needs of students in the sixth form. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic. They are aware of the students' abilities and are always encouraging them to work with pace and depth. Students have very good ICT knowledge and employ it well across most subjects.
166. Standards are well above average. All students benefit from a broad provision and those that are not studying an examination subject are expected to take and pass the European Computer Driving Licence assessment which the students perceive as worthwhile. A-level results are very good and standards observed in the vocational subject were also very high. Very good achievement is evident in lessons because of the high expectations of the teachers. Students are enthusiastic and skilled in using their ICT skills. All students are aware of their progress and their attainment levels and they are encouraged to aim higher.
167. Students clearly enjoy the subject and they are complimentary about their teachers. The teaching is very good. Teachers have established a strong working relationship with students, resulting in a rapid pace of learning. Their enthusiasm encourages students to produce very good work. The students' attitudes are excellent.
168. Leadership and management are strong. The department is very well organised and is proactive in managing improvements. The management ethos is to provide facilities and

opportunities for students to build their skills to levels that will enable them to use ICT independently and effectively. The networked computer suites are in high demand and are sufficient to meet this demand. The computer network and equipment are well maintained and reliable.

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

169. Cross-curricular use of ICT is often good due to the strong programme of staff development and monitoring of standards. Students show confidence and skill in using ICT to research and present their work.

### **HUMANITIES**

The focus of the inspection was on geography, history and psychology. One lesson of law was sampled. In the lesson seen, both the teaching and the students' achievement were very good. Attitudes and relationships were also very positive.

#### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

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

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding of the requirements of the examination system.
- Students have very positive attitudes to their work.
- Standards at AS level are well above average.

#### **Commentary**

170. Standards of attainment at AS level are well above the national average. Overall, standards have risen since the last inspection, but attainment at the highest grades had fallen in recent years. In 2003, this trend was reversed at AS level. The scrutiny of students' work shows that they adapt quickly to the study patterns required for success in the examination and achieve well in lessons. Standards at 'A' level are above average. Attainment at the highest grades had fallen in recent years but the work seen in lessons and in students' folders shows that the trend has been reversed. When their attainment is judged in relation to their GCSE results, the students are achieving well overall, although the attainment of male students, at both AS and 'A' level, is above their expected grades more often than that of female students.

171. Scrutiny of work shows that teaching and learning are good over time and contribute to the good progress which students make. In lessons where the teaching is very good, teachers show good subject knowledge and good understanding of the requirements of the examinations, and they explain these well to the students. Teachers have very high expectations and provide well for individual students through the development of study skills. Support is provided outside of lessons to aid students in raising their attainment. The students value this support highly. Work is marked regularly to examination criteria and the interpretation of mark schemes is shared with students. Valuable, detailed feedback is given, both verbally and in writing, to help students improve their grades. Students are well motivated and make rapid gains in acquiring new skills, knowledge and understanding. Their pace of work and their productivity are high. Attitudes in lessons are very good, and relationships between teachers and students and amongst the students themselves are also good.

172. The department is well led and managed. The head of department has a clear vision of what to improve and this is shared well with other members of the department. Teachers' professional development benefits from the links with the university and initial teacher training. Deployment

of staff is effective to make best use of teachers' subject knowledge and to support their development. Assessment is used well in the setting of targets for improvement. Accommodation for geography is satisfactory. Resources to support learning are good. Teacher-produced resources are very effective and ICT is used well to support learning and research. Since the last inspection there has been improvement in examination results and in the use of ICT to support learning in the subject.

## History

Provision in history is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weakness

- High standards of written work seen during the inspection.
- Well-informed teaching produces a critical and analytical approach to learning.
- Good subject knowledge provides students with a context for the interpretation and evaluation of source material.
- There is some confusion amongst the weaker students about the relative value of different kinds of historical evidence.

### Commentary

173. In 2002, results in the A-level examination were above the national average and this reflected a trend of continuously better than average results over the previous four years. In 2003, the results were well above average.
174. Standards of work seen during the inspection were well above average. Current standards of attainment are higher than those achieved in the 2002 examination because of constantly improving teaching and increasing familiarity with the requirements of the new A-level course.
175. Achievement is excellent. Students in Year 12 can analyse and evaluate each other's written work. In doing this, they demonstrate extensive, relevant subject knowledge and a clear, reasoned awareness of examination assessment criteria. In Year 13, students show a sophisticated general awareness of how to evaluate historical sources and specific understanding of methods of determining the usefulness of primary and secondary sources dealing with opposition to the Nazi regime. Higher attaining students, as a matter of course, consider source limitations – scope, typicality or intended audience – when testing for usefulness. Lower attaining students tend to assume that evidence from primary sources is invariably more valuable than that taken from secondary sources. Students' knowledge of historians and what they have written is impressively wide ranging.
176. Higher attaining students produce written essays of considerable quality. These are well structured to form clear, balanced arguments or offer critical causal explanations. Occasional weaknesses appear in the work of lower attaining students – for example, failing to make direct source references or developing only one side of an argument.
177. The quality of teaching is very good and occasionally excellent. Teacher knowledge is extensive and pedagogy is both confident and assured. A notable feature of teaching in the sixth form is the way in which active learning strategies from the main school are applied to A-level work. This can take many forms – card sorts, mind mapping, source-based investigations – common to all is a facility for inviting students to ask their own question, form and test their own hypotheses and generally enable them to become independent learners.
178. Leadership and management are outstanding. The head of department provides expert subject leadership and a reflective, inclusive management style that is based on, and driven by, a genuine interest in learning and the raising of achievement. As a result of this, standards have risen since the last inspection, particularly in the area of structured essay work.

## Psychology

Provision in psychology is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and make lessons exciting.
- Lessons are planned to have a variety of learning experiences.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Marking ensures that action points are clear and gives students the responsibility for solving problems.
- Some students' writing lacks clarity and precision.

### Commentary

179. Results over the last few years have been average or above average in both Year 12 and Year 13. In 2003, the results, particularly in Year 13, were average. This represents a temporary decline in standards. Girls outperform boys for the higher grades because they work harder. The variance in examination performance has been due to a lack of continuity in teaching. The school has now appointed two well-qualified specialist psychology teachers, and the results of the present cohorts are predicted to be above average.
180. The subject is new to students entering Year 12 and it is exciting. It requires more attention to writing than it is receiving from a minority of students. Psychology is a comprehensive two-year curriculum which is demanding and requires many skills. A majority of girls and a minority of boys have realised this fact and they are doing well in their studies. The subject is popular and numbers are growing. The results show good value added in students' achievement in a significant number of cases.
181. Standards seen in Year 12 psychology are average or above. There is scope for these standards to rise. In Year 13, current standards are above average. Most students are performing well in relation to school predictions. They can recall previous work accurately and use the required technical vocabulary. Achievement overall is good. Work on health, stress and mental deficiencies bordered on excellent in terms of knowledge. Some written work, however, shows errors of grammar which lower the standard. Year 12 students are coming to terms with this new discipline and teachers make their work interesting and challenging. The ethical considerations necessary to psychological research fascinate students. In Year 13, students have a clear insight into psychological research and can respond to precise questions on a number of studies. The higher attaining students can present their own ideas with confidence.
182. Teaching is very good and students learn well. Lessons are carefully prepared and well presented, providing the right level of pace and challenge. Female students and most male students work hard in class, but the output of independent work is not as high as it should be and students appear to ignore the good advice of their teachers to undertake background reading. ICT is used well and is being further developed for research purposes. Although a few students do read around the subject, more independent research is required. Teachers are looking at strategies to further improve students' independent reading. Assessment and marking are good. Teachers have high expectations of students and keep them informed of how well they are performing. Targets are set to secure improvement.
183. Leadership and management are very good. The programme of psychology is well organised. The subject is making progress over time despite the lower examination results in 2003. Since the last report, the appointment of two specialist psychologists has raised the standard of work

significantly. Their commitment and dynamic energy have raised the overall performance of the subject from good to very good provision.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

### **Design and technology**

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

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

- Teaching is good and sometimes very good and extends the knowledge and understanding of students.
- Standards achieved by students at AS- and A-level are above average.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good and lead to good teamwork and planning.
- Assessment is used effectively to inform and improve the work of students.
- The use of display as a resource is not firmly established in teaching and to identify standards in designing and making.

#### **Commentary**

184. In 2003, standards were above expectations for students at the end of Year 12 completing the design and technology AS-level course in product design. Standards were also above average for the A-level students at the end of Year 13. In lessons, standards are above average. Achievement is good, and sometimes very good.
185. At AS-level, students build effectively upon their GCSE experience to extend their designing and making skills. The work is challenging and students undertake a wide range of projects through resistant materials and textiles. Design work is good, being based on thorough research and design development. At A2-level, students experiment and explore innovative designs leading to creative outcomes. For example, students working through textiles model their design concepts as part of the development process. Design ideas are based on extensive research using a number of sources, including the Internet. Good use is made of ICT for coursework folios through research and presentation. For both AS- and A2-level courses, very good use is made of visits and links with industry to extend practical skills and design thinking.
186. In lessons, the overall quality of teaching and learning is good and often very good. Where lessons are good or better, expectations are high, the work is challenging and effectively extends knowledge and understanding. Teachers work very well with students to support them in individual project work. The good working relationship contributes to good progress in lessons and the high level of interest and motivation shown by students.
187. The leadership and management of the department are very good and the staff work together very well as a team. Courses are well planned. Assessment practice is good and used very well to monitor progress and attainment, providing students with clear actions for improvement. There is good monitoring of teaching and evaluation of the work of the department. Resources for teaching and learning are good. The quality of display varies across the department and is not used effectively as a resource for teaching and to identify standards.

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

### **Media studies**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are well above average as a result of very good teaching.
- Students show very good understanding of how film and television represent reality.
- They have a secure knowledge of the technical language.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory.

### **Commentary**

188. Standards in examinations are well above average. Over half the students entered for A-level reached the highest grades (A and B) in 2003. Standards seen during the inspection were very good: students explored and analysed intelligently the presentation of different aspects of Richard Curtis' films. They write perceptively, knowledgeably and with good analytical skills. Students achieve very well, considering that none so far has studied the subject before embarking on the A-level course. Media studies has only recently been introduced at GCSE.

189. Students learn very well because they are highly motivated both by the content of the course and by the very good teaching. More able students make very good judgements about the films they have studied, commenting on dominant ideologies. They show sophistication, insight and keen powers of observation in their comments. Less academic students make competent contributions and write well. In one lesson, students were seen making very good judgements about class, masculinity and Britishness in 'Four Weddings and a Funeral'. Teachers have an excellent knowledge of the subject, which they convey with infectious enthusiasm. They have high expectations of their students. Students know how to improve because they set their own targets based on the detailed comments they receive from their teachers. The marking of students' written work is rigorous and thorough.

190. The leadership of the department is dynamic and innovative. The subject is very well managed, with very good self-evaluation of examination results and trends, although these are not fully utilised to make further improvements. Accommodation is unsatisfactory for a subject which is expanding in numbers. Resources are good, with modern computers, editing facilities and sufficient cameras. The subject has been introduced since the last inspection. Over the last three years there has been very good improvement in examination results.

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

Physical education was not a focus for the post-16 part of this inspection. However, the provision for students involved in examination and extra-curricular activities in physical education is **good**. Students engage in discussions, calling upon their knowledge and understanding of sporting cultures very effectively. Teaching, curriculum planning, support and guidance are good, ensuring students have worthwhile learning experiences and sporting opportunities.

## **BUSINESS**

### **Business studies**

Provision in business studies is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are above the national average and have improved significantly since the last inspection.
- The overall quality of teaching is good, although there is some unevenness.
- Leadership and management are very good.

- Students lack sufficient opportunities to develop independent investigative research and discussion.
- Assessment data is full and comprehensive but is not consistently used to ensure students know what they have to do to improve their grades.

## **Commentary**

191. The A-level examination results show a steady improvement since the last inspection and, in most years, have been above or well above the national average. For the last three years, the proportion of students achieving the highest A and B grades has been consistently above the national average. In the past two years, over half of all students entering the examination have achieved A or B grades. The results in the AS-level examination have a similar pattern but last year they showed a decline owing to less than optimum teaching conditions, including a lack of specialist teaching and classes held out of normal school hours owing to accommodation problems. The majority of students in both the A-level and AS-level examinations achieve or exceed their predicted grade which represents good and, sometimes very good, achievement.
192. Standards in Year 13 are above average. Students have good skills in business decision making which are underpinned by a strong command of theoretical concepts. Their application and evaluation of business problems is always good. When challenged by complex problems they are capable of good strategic thinking. They have the capacity to examine difficult business issues in depth and would welcome more opportunities to do so. Students' knowledge, combined with good lateral thinking skills, enables them to evaluate the impact of external factors on decision making and to examine a variety of business options. This was well exemplified in a lesson about pressure groups where students assessed the negative and positive impact on business, evaluated responses and offered a number of solutions to new business. Standards in the sixth form are high overall and most students achieve well as a result of challenging teaching.
193. The quality of teaching is good overall, although there is some unevenness at times. Effective teaching is based on very good subject knowledge, sound understanding of the curriculum and very well developed schemes of work. Teachers demonstrate clear exposition with stimulating questioning and activities that make use of local and national problems to generate lively discussion. They set a brisk learning pace, rapidly building knowledge and understanding in the subject. The students are well motivated and their answers to questions show the capacity to extend their thinking and predict a range of business outcomes. In some less effective lessons where there is over-reliance on note-taking based on a simple question and answer format, students lack opportunities to apply their knowledge to real-life business problems and, though keen to make progress, they become demotivated. These lessons are no more than satisfactory at best. However, even in the best lessons, the most able students sometimes lack sufficient opportunities to develop their powers of critical analysis. Independent investigative research and analysis require further development. There is little evidence in lessons or written work of any discussion of business in the global context.
194. The subject is very well led and managed. The monitoring and evaluation of quality are very effective and lead to clear plans for improvement. Citizenship, social, moral and cultural issues are well integrated into lessons. Assessment is comprehensive but individual feedback to students does not specify exactly what students should do to raise their grades, nor does it sufficiently highlight their strengths and weaknesses. Similarly, marking does not clearly set out the criteria which teachers are using to reach the grade awarded. Students also need more special guidance and practice on examination techniques if they are to achieve the highest grades. The present curriculum has a mainly academic focus. A review of the curriculum, being undertaken currently as part of a citywide review of post-16 education, is seeking, appropriately, to broaden the provision through a vocational route.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

## Core/AS-level critical thinking

Provision in the general and key skills programme (core) in Year 12 which leads into the optional AS-level critical thinking course in Year 13 is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The core programme provides very well for students' personal development and the development of key skills.
- Students are very well prepared through the programme for university application and entry procedures.
- There is insufficient planned provision for careers guidance for the minority of students who require it.
- The critical thinking course is very challenging and prepares students very well for the demands of academic life.

### Commentary

195. The school provides a core programme throughout Year 12 and in the early part of Year 13 which makes an extremely effective contribution to the personal and academic development of all students. The taught programme contains personal, social and health education strands as well as elements of education for citizenship and religious education. Additionally, there are modules which inform students about higher education opportunities, and other opportunities after age 18, including gap years and, where required, career opportunities. Matters concerning university application and self-presentation are also helpfully covered. Included in the programme is the requirement for all students to attend lessons in ICT leading to the European Computer Driving Licence qualification, which ensures that they have good computer skills to support their learning and research. Lessons seen during the inspection were well taught, provided a range of important information and self-presentation skills and ensured high levels of student participation through well-chosen activities and positive student-teacher relationships.
196. Alongside the taught programme the school makes good provision for other elements of key skills by requiring subjects to ensure that communication and presentation skills are developed, and some good examples of these were seen during the inspection. Students' personal development is further enhanced by the requirement for all to take part in some kind of community work, either with younger pupils in the main school or in the community at large. Ten hours contribution is a minimum, and many students do more.
197. The school's whole provision for the personal development of its students is very good and highly effective. It is particularly effective because its detailed planning is extremely good and it is very well taught by a specialist team of teachers. The leadership and management of this area of the curriculum are very good and the commitment of participating staff is very high.
198. In the first term of Year 13, students are able, if they wish, to move onto the AS-level course in critical thinking. This is a very demanding course which makes a very good contribution to students' thinking and reasoning skills, and consequently to their ability to learn and cope with academic life. The lesson seen was very well taught and the students' response and engagement were very positive. Again, the programme of study is punctiliously prepared, providing a very sound base and making a very positive contribution to the quality of the teaching.



## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
How inclusive the school is		2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3	2
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	2	2
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>		<b>2</b>
Pupils' and students' achievement	3	3
<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		2
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>		<b>3</b>
The quality of teaching	3	3
How well pupils learn	3	3
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	5	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2	2
<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).*

