

# INSPECTION REPORT

## THE CRYPT SCHOOL

Podsmead

LEA area: Gloucestershire

Unique reference number: 115755

Headteacher: Mr D J Lamper

Lead inspector: Ms E Gillmon

Dates of inspection: 23<sup>rd</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> February 2004

Inspection number: 259232

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar (selective)
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Male
Number on roll:	709
School address:	Podsmead Gloucester Gloucestershire
Postcode:	GL2 5AE
Telephone number:	01452 530291
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr R James
Date of previous inspection:	March 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The Crypt School is an 11–18 selective Foundation school for boys with specialist science college status. The percentage of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) is below average. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below average, but above the average for selective schools. The school draws the majority of its pupils from the city of Gloucester and about ten per cent from a wider geographical area, and more than 40 primary schools. Attainment on entry is lower than in many schools of a similar type within the local education authority. It is located on the western edge of the town of Gloucester, including two wards in which there is a relatively high level of social deprivation. The percentage of pupils from ethnic minority groups is very low, and 30 pupils in the school have English as an additional language. The small sixth form admits girls (currently 15) and works closely in a newly formed consortium with three other schools, including one selective school, to provide a wider range of post-16 courses than it could provide on its own.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2774	Ms E Gillmon	Lead inspector	
31758	Mr E Tipper	Lay inspector	
7020	Mr P Chambers	Team inspector	Mathematics
19913	Mr R Garrett	Team inspector	English Drama
12762	Mr R Catchpole	Team inspector	Science Biology in the sixth form
18076	Mr H Dodd	Team inspector	Physics in the sixth form
17278	Mr B Abrams	Team inspector	Chemistry in the sixth form
10385	Mr K Hopkins	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
32367	Ms J Pike	Team inspector	Art and design
1759	Mr G Edwards	Team inspector	Design and technology
17732	Mr D Martin	Team inspector	Geography History
2626	Ms M Thompson	Team inspector	English as an additional language Modern foreign languages
19867	Mr M Pettitt	Team inspector	Music
20192	Mr T McDermott	Team inspector Sixth-form co-ordinator	Physical education
30758	Ms E Ing	Team inspector	Religious education
32229	Ms M Comer	Team inspector	Business education in the sixth form Citizenship
3731	Mr W Robson	Team inspector	Special educational needs

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The Crypt School is a good and improving school.** It is justifiably proud of its 465 year heritage and traditions, but is equally focused on future developments such as its specialist Science College designation and emerging sixth form partnership. The school provides a good quality of education for pupils, within a caring environment. External examination results at the ages of 14 and 16 are well above national averages and represent good achievement. There has been a steady improvement in examination results in recent years. Pupils' attitudes to learning are mostly very good and the teaching is predominantly good. The school provides **good value for money**, evidenced by the considerable value added to pupils' achievement during their time at the school.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Improving standards and good learning gains in Years 7 to 9 and the sixth form.
- The very good quality of pastoral care.
- A positive ethos, within which pupils demonstrate mature attitudes to learning and achievement and responsible behaviour towards their peers and others.
- The very good leadership of the headteacher
- There is a lack of systematic accountability within and between the management tiers.
- Statutory requirements in relation to citizenship and some aspects of information and communication technology (ICT) are not met.
- The provision for modern foreign languages, particularly French, is unsatisfactory.

The school has made good improvement since its last inspection in 1998 when standards and the quality of education were significantly lower than at present. The key issues raised have been addressed, but the school still does not meet the requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E – well below average; E\* - very low  
Similar schools are other selective boys' schools.*

**Standards attained in all years and in most subjects, with the exception of modern languages, are above average and frequently well above.** When compared with other selective boys' schools, however, the standards are below the average.

Throughout their time in this school, the great majority of pupils achieve well in relation to their capabilities and their prior attainment in national tests at the end of Year 6. At the end of Key Stage 3 (Years 7 to 9), they have made significant progress. Pupils with particular needs, including the very able and talented, those for whom English is not their mother tongue and those with special educational needs, achieve well because of the level of support provided and the concern for the individual which is a strong feature of the school.

**Pupils' attitudes, behaviour, social development and attendance are good.** Their attendance record is well above average and most are generally punctual in arrival at school. The pupils demonstrate sensitive responses to spiritual matters, have a good sense of right and wrong, and are confident in articulating their views. The school promotes high standards of respect for individuals, enthusiasm for competition and encouragement of learning to which the pupils respond positively.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

**The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching and learning are good overall.** Examples of excellent teaching were observed in history and in biology. Examples of very effective teaching were also consistently observed in physical education. The pupils respond well to the school's ethos and to the high standard of individual pupil monitoring of academic progress. The curriculum meets National Curriculum requirements. However, the provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory, and teaching in modern foreign languages is unsatisfactory in all key stages, resulting in de-motivation of pupils.

**The provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is very good,** and the school is developing good methods of seeking and acting on their views. The provision of support, advice and guidance, based on monitoring of pupils' achievement, is very good, although the limited careers advice available does not meet the needs of all pupils. **Links with parents are good** and the school is increasingly developing good working relationships with other schools through its specialist school links and its emerging sixth form partnership.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall.** The headteacher provides clear direction for the school and demonstrates a strong sense of purpose and strategic vision. He is supported by a senior management team which has yet to assume adequate responsibility for whole-school developments and demonstrate an appropriate level of challenge to stimulate the higher standards of performance of which both staff and pupils may be capable. Day-to-day operations within the school are efficiently managed and with sensitivity to the needs of individuals. The quality of middle management is variable - it is mainly good, and occasionally very good. Governors are very supportive of the work of the school and have a strong focus on its strategic development, but now need to be more rigorous in ensuring that statutory curriculum requirements are fully met.

## PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

**Parents show strong support for the school.** The great majority considers that the school is well led and managed. They have concerns about the teaching of modern foreign languages. The Crypt pupils are proud of their school and consider that they are fairly treated. Both parents and pupils expressed dissatisfaction with aspects of the school's environment, in particular the poor quality of the school's library resource, but acknowledged that improvements were currently in hand.

## IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- take urgent steps to improve the teaching of French in order to raise standards of attainment and alter pupils' perceptions about foreign language learning;
- ensure that all pupils receive a consistent, good quality programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) and the full statutory entitlement to citizenship education;
- clarify the lines of accountability within the school's management structure and strengthen the senior management team's capacity to oversee the implementation of whole-school policies;
- accelerate improvements to the ICT infrastructure and to the library resource in the school to support developments in teaching across the curriculum.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- secure appropriate provision and assessment of ICT capabilities for all pupils in Years 10 and 11;
- comply with the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship.

## THE SIXTH FORM AT THE CRYPT SCHOOL

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form at The Crypt School is smaller than average, with 144 students. Although expenditure is relatively high, **it is a cost-effective sixth form** because the quality of both teaching and learning are good, achievement is above average, and standards are broadly average. It provides a good quality of education to its students, and does not draw on funds nominally assigned to the rest of the school. It therefore gives satisfactory value for money. A recently formed collaboration with other schools enables students to have access to a wider choice of courses. A rising trend of academic performance has led to an increase in students, and almost all of Year 11 transfer into the sixth form. About one in ten of current students has come to the sixth form from other schools in the area. Well over nine-tenths of students who start in the sixth form remain on roll over the course of a year. Retention on individual courses is better than this. Almost three-quarters of students completing two-year courses go on to higher education. The remaining quarter go into further education or employment.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Consistently good quality of teaching which leads to good learning.
- An increasing range of courses which meets students' needs and aspirations.
- Very good academic and pastoral support given to students.
- High standards in art, physical education and biology.
- Good attitudes to learning, and very good behaviour, of students.
- Management of the sixth form lacks clear structure and drive.

### 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 literature	<b>Provision is good.</b> Standards are above average, and teaching and learning are good. Students have good attitudes to work, and they achieve well.
Mathematics	<b>Provision is good.</b> Good teaching leads directly to good achievement. Standards of work seen are above average. Results in 2003 were in line with the national expectation. A wide range of courses provides students with very good curricular opportunities.
Biology	<b>Provision is very good.</b> Standards are very good. Students have very good attitudes to learning, and this, combined with very good teaching, ensures very good achievement.
Chemistry	<b>Provision is good.</b> Standards are good in Year 13. Good teaching leads to good learning. Students' attitudes are very good and these ensure good achievement. ICT is not used well enough to secure higher standards.
Physics	<b>Provision is satisfactory.</b> Standards are average and students achieve well. Teaching and learning are good. Coursework assignments are particularly good. Assessment data is not used to set targets and to track progress.
Computer studies	<b>Provision is good.</b> Good teaching leads directly to good learning. Standards are above average, and achievement is good.
Design and technology	<b>Provision is satisfactory.</b> Good teaching, including good links with industry. Standards have been lower than predicted in recent years but are broadly average. Achievement is satisfactory.



Curriculum area	Evaluation
Art	<b>Provision is very good.</b> Examination results in 2003 were in line with the national expectation. Standards in lessons are very high. Very good teaching and very good learning are underpinned by the excellent attitudes of the students, ensuring very good achievement. Standards of work in Year 13 are excellent.
Business studies	<b>Provision is good.</b> A popular course where good teaching leads to good learning. Students have very good attitudes, and this underpins very good overall achievement.

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

## ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

This is very good. Before students enter the sixth form, they are made aware of the demands that sixth form study will place on them. They are very clear about the benefits of extended education. On their courses of study, students' academic progress and personal development are now being systematically monitored. Individual teachers make themselves available in regular tutorial and guidance sessions to extend or secure knowledge and understanding. Preparations for leaving the sixth form are comprehensive, and students are well supported to experience directly the new dimensions of higher education, further education and employment. Students join the sixth form from other schools because they are clear about the courses the sixth form has to offer, and the work they will be required to complete in order to succeed.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership of the sixth form by the headteacher is satisfactory. He has a clear strategic vision for improving standards and has introduced innovative curriculum developments. However, management of the sixth form is ineffective and therefore unsatisfactory. Development planning is unclear and there is a lack of internal systems to secure consistent monitoring of the quality of provision and teaching.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students interviewed by the inspection team were very positive about their sixth form experience. They considered that courses provided by the sixth form met their needs and aspirations well, and that teachers were accessible and helpful, should difficulties arise with their work. They felt that they were encouraged to work independently, and to research much of their work for themselves. In responses to a questionnaire, students indicated their belief that the teaching was challenging, and that teachers were expert in their subject knowledge. However, a substantial number of students felt that the school did not seek or listen to their views, nor that it provided sufficient worthwhile enrichment activities outside the taught courses. Inspectors agree with the students' views about enrichment activities, but found no evidence to support the minority contention expressed in the questionnaires that students do not get on well together.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

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

Pupils at The Crypt School consistently attain above average and well above average standards in external examinations at the end of both Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher grades in GCSE examinations in 2002 and 2003 was well above the national average, although in comparison with other boys' selective schools it was below average in both years. A rising trend has been noted over the past four years, and inspectors found that pupils currently at the school were achieving well in relation to their prior attainment.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- A consistently rising trend in standards in all key stages.
- Good value added from Year 7 to Year 9.
- GCSE results are well above the national average, but below the average for selective boys' schools, particularly at the higher grades.
- Achievement in the sixth form is good relative to students' prior attainment.
- Standards of work observed during the inspection were generally appropriate to the pupils' age and stage of courses being followed.
- Standards in modern languages are below expectation at all stages.

#### Commentary

##### Key Stage 3

1. The attainment of pupils entering the school in Year 7 is above the national average, but lower than that recorded by other selective boys' schools in the immediate locality. The school's results in the end of Year 9 national tests have been above average in recent years and have improved at a faster rate than that nationally. In 2003, the pupils attained an overall average points score which was well above the national average and placed the school amongst the top 50 schools nationally for the value added between Year 7 and Year 9.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	40.1 (39.5)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	44.8 (43.1)	35.4 (34.7)
science	40.0 (39.1)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 113 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

2. Pupils make good progress in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science in this key stage. Standards observed during lessons and in the sampling of pupils' work matched the test and examination results. Attainment above expectation was observed in some lessons, including history, geography, German, religious education and physical education. Standards in other subjects were considered to be in line with what should be expected considering the pupils' age and stage of the course, with the exception of French and citizenship where they were below expectation.

## Key Stage 4

3. GCSE results were well above the national average in 2003, with 90 per cent of pupils achieving 5+ A\*-C grades, but the proportion achieving the higher A\*-B grades was considerably lower than that in comparable schools. This, nonetheless, represented good achievement for the cohort of pupils involved.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	90 (88)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	100 (97)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	45.3 (34.7)	45.0 (34.7)

*There were 109 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

4. GCSE results in recent years have fluctuated slightly, but there has been a rising trend at a rate in excess of the national trend. In 2002 and 2003, they were well above those of similar schools nationally, with the rise in pupils' average points score exceeding the national trend, but remaining at the lower end of the selective schools' profile. The school sets challenging but realistic targets, including those specific to its specialist status as a Science College.

Performance in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11, compared with:	all schools			similar schools
	2000	2001	2002	2002
	A	A	A	E*

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

5. Amongst overall good attainment in most examination subjects, the best GCSE outcomes have been in English and mathematics.
6. Standards observed during the inspection were uniformly in line with, or above, expectation except in French and citizenship where they were below. In French, the quality of teaching was observed to have a strongly de-motivating impact on the pupils in Years 7 to 9, with consequent poor performance in Years 10 and 11 and beyond. In citizenship, the poor standards observed arise from a lack of focused teaching and assessment and pupils are unable to identify what they have learned.
7. The school has instituted a strong, individual target-setting process so that progress is regularly monitored and reported to parents. Consequently, during the inspection, pupils were found to be fully aware of their own progress.
8. Students with special educational needs achieve well. Teachers are sufficiently aware of their needs to enable them to make at least satisfactory progress in all subjects. Students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties do not always achieve as well as others because of lack of concentration, but they receive good support to help them to overcome their difficulties and improve their work. Extra support for students with more severe difficulties from a learning support worker enables them to achieve well. The achievement of pupils for whom English is an additional language is equally good, and the school is very inclusive.
9. The quality of pupils' work throughout is supported by good skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing. Pupils use good numeracy skills effectively throughout the curriculum.

## Sixth Form

- Standards are good in the sixth form. A-level and AS results in 2003 were above the national average for boys; they have consistently improved against predictions over the past four years, with a considerable increase in the proportion of A-B grades. Forty per cent of A-level entries resulted in these grades in 2003 compared with 25 per cent in 2002, and increases were gained in most subjects. During the inspection, standards of work seen were consistently good and appropriate to the stage of the courses being followed.
- A few students in the sixth form have special educational needs, mostly specific learning difficulties (dyslexia). They achieve well. Teachers are very aware of their needs and students are confident enough to ask for extra support if they need it. This enables them to maintain the good progress that they have made in previous years in the main school.

### **Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2003**

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	94.4 (89.8)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	32.1 (20.3)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per pupil	307.9 (229.5)	253.1 (254.5)

*There were 58 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

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

Pupils' behaviour is generally good in the main school and very good in the sixth form. Their attitudes to work and towards each other and adults are good throughout the school, whilst their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is satisfactory. Attendance is very good.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils are enthusiastic in their approach to lessons and the activities provided for them outside the school day.
- The identification of behavioural problems within the school, and the implementation of strategies to address them, work well in controlling the inappropriate behaviour of a small number of pupils.
- Pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to develop an understanding of an emerging multicultural society.
- Attendance is well above average.

## **Commentary**

- Pupils approach most lessons with enthusiasm, as they do their extra-curricular activities. Their good attitudes to learning tend to reflect the quality of teaching. Where the subject is made interesting and the learning enjoyable, pupils respond in a very positive manner. This is particularly noticeable in design and technology, geography, history, ICT, music and physical education. Pupils relish the challenges and high expectations set by teachers and work well with each other in seeking to achieve them. In the small number of lessons which do not catch their imagination, however, they sometimes become restless and inattentive.
- There is a very clear system for controlling behaviour which is well implemented throughout the school. This is a considerable improvement on the situation at the last inspection. Behaviour is generally good in the classroom and very good in lessons where teaching is of a high standard. However, on the occasions where it is not, and particularly where teachers'

behaviour management skills are weak, minor disruptions can occur. Pupils are very attentive in assemblies and are generally amicable towards each other in the playground. They also move about the school in a purposeful and orderly manner with little evidence of pushing and shoving in the corridors. The school is aware of the existence of bullying and works hard to identify and address situations as they arise. Both parents and pupils appreciate this and several expressed the view that instances of bullying are dealt with promptly and effectively.

14. The opportunities for pupils to explore their own cultures and those of others are very limited and have improved little since the last inspection. Some subject departments enable pupils to acquire an understanding of the lifestyles of others, within their own country and abroad, through lessons and school trips. However, there is no whole-school approach to enable them to fully appreciate the different beliefs and understandings of other peoples and to fully prepare them for life in a multicultural society.
15. Students with special educational needs have positive attitudes. They respond well to the support that they receive from teachers and the learning support worker.

### Attendance

16. The school has consistently high levels of attendance. This reflects the support of parents and the eagerness with which most pupils come to school. Heads of year, working with the form tutors, identify the minority of pupils with poor attendance and take action to improve the situation. However, punctuality is less good. A small minority of pupils seem to see the beginning of the first lesson as the start of the school day. Consequently, they do not arrive at the beginning of registration and pupils often do not arrive promptly for lessons which then start late or are disrupted.

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

Authorised absence	
School data	5.6
National data	8.3

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	1.1

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

### Exclusions

#### *Ethnic background of pupils*

#### *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	608	35	2
White – Irish	2	0	0
White – any other White background	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	12	1	0
Mixed – White and Asian	6	3	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	8	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	32	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	3	0	0

Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	3	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	5	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1	0	0
Chinese	3	0	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	2	0	0

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

## Sixth Form

17. Students' behaviour is very good and they have the same positive attitudes to their learning as younger pupils in the main school. While their attendance is very good, the recording of it gives cause for concern. When they have finished lessons for the day they may be given permission to leave school. However, they do not always 'sign out'. The present system of recording attendance/absence operated by the school allows students to slip through the net. This could have serious consequences in the event of an evacuation of the school.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall education provided by the school is good because teaching, learning, the curriculum, assessment, support and guidance are all effective and enable pupils to achieve well. There are some areas of provision in need of development, but no major shortcomings in provision. Very good extra-curricular activities contribute not only to the standards attained but also to the quality of school life, although the range of enrichment opportunities in the sixth form is relatively limited.

### Teaching and learning

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is mainly good.
- The assessment and progress reporting system contributes to effective learning and achievement.
- Monitoring of teaching is unsystematic and infrequent.
- The assessment of pupils' ICT capability within subjects is weak.

### Commentary

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 112 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactor y	Poor	Very poor
2 (1.8%)	19 (17.1%)	62 (55.9%)	22 (19.8%)	5 (4.5%)	1 (0.9%)	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.*

18. Pupils at The Crypt School expect to learn and they do. Good and very good teaching was observed in 75 per cent of lessons overall, and some excellent teaching was observed in biology and in history where well-planned, fast-paced lessons stimulated pupils' response and

challenged their thinking. Very good teaching was seen in art, ICT and physical education which engaged all pupils in productive activity. Of the 22 lessons which were just satisfactory, weaknesses in planning, including lack of focus on work to suit different rates of learning, reduced the effectiveness of the teaching. Learning objectives were not always made clear to pupils, and in some cases there was insufficient challenge or extension for more able pupils. Over-concentration on a didactic teaching approach, coupled with slow pace, on occasions produced disruptive behaviour by a minority of pupils which reduced the learning of others within a lesson.

19. Characteristics of those lessons judged to be unsatisfactory were:

- poor relationships between teacher and pupils;
- lack of planning;
- failure to ensure that pupils understood the nature of the task or the learning objective;
- over-estimation of pupils' understanding;
- cursory marking of work which was unhelpful and did not indicate how to improve;
- setting of tasks which did not engage pupils;
- overuse of lecturing style.

20. The teaching of students with special educational needs is good. Teachers are aware of their needs and support individuals well so that they can complete work and make good progress. Good planning with subject teachers enables the learning support worker to provide effective support for individual students in lessons. In art and physical education, teachers plan their lessons well to ensure that all pupils can participate fully. However, in other subjects, teachers rarely use information from students' individual education plans to adapt their teaching methods. As a result, students often have to rely on extra help from teachers with work that is too difficult for them to manage independently.

21. Pupils are very positive about the teaching they receive and recognise the expertise of teachers and their concern for individual progress. In practical and aesthetic subjects, such as art, ICT and physical education, very good teaching results in high quality outcomes and performance. Opportunities to develop literacy and numeracy skills were generally well recognised and used in other subjects, but the promotion of independent learning is not yet a recognisable feature within several departments.

22. The use of ICT to support teaching is limited by the level of access to equipment. Current infrastructural planning, due for realisation in September 2004, will facilitate a greater use of the medium, providing schemes of work are updated and there is a clear oversight of its uptake.

23. Relationships between teachers and pupils are generally very good and contribute significantly to pupils' achievement. However, a minority of pupils and their parents commented on the occasional lack of respect by individual teachers for pupils.

24. The good and very good teaching in the school stems from a strongly professional approach by teachers whose concern for their pupils is at the forefront of this. Consequently, they are afforded a high degree of autonomy. Although departmental management is generally good, there is an evident reluctance to monitor the quality of classroom practice on a regular basis. This limits opportunities to share good practice widely and raise good teaching to very good and excellent.

## **Assessment**

25. Overall, the school has good assessment procedures and a policy which identifies assessment as a constructive means of raising standards. It collects an extensive range of data about pupils' attainment and progress, but its use is fragmented. Implementation of the school's assessment policy is not sufficiently consistent due to a lack of monitoring by senior managers. In some subjects, assessment is well used to support day-to-day classroom work,

but in others the time lag between assessments and target setting is too great to be effective. A more integrated approach to the use of available information in the planning of teaching and the monitoring of pupil progress is needed. The quality of everyday marking is variable between teachers and between departments. Where good practice exists, it has a positive impact on pupils' progress.

## **Sixth Form**

26. Teaching and learning in the sixth form are good overall and very good in art, biology, design and technology, geography and physical education. Students have confidence in their teachers and respect their knowledge and expertise. Relationships are very good and the level of support and guidance provided within subject departments enables many students who embark on AS and A-level courses to achieve beyond expectation. Lessons are well planned and offer a good level of challenge and stimulus.

## **The curriculum**

The school provides a satisfactory curriculum, which is enriched by a very good programme of extra-curricular activities. The school is well staffed and has a satisfactory level of accommodation and resources.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good provision of extra-curricular activities, especially in art, design and technology, drama, English, mathematics and physical education.
- A strong commitment to providing equal opportunities for all pupils.
- Statutory requirements are not met regarding citizenship, the daily act of collective worship, or ICT for those who do not follow the GCSE course.
- Provision for personal, social and health education is unsatisfactory.
- The school's specialist status as a Science College is not yet apparent in its day-to-day operation and there is little awareness of the impact among pupils, staff or parents.

## **Commentary**

27. The school places strong emphasis on meeting the needs of all pupils. In Years 7 to 9, the National Curriculum is enhanced by opportunities for pupils to study a second language and experience drama. In Years 10 and 11, pupils study an appropriate number of core subjects which ensures breadth and there are opportunities to take a range of optional subjects including drama, religious education and Russian. Whilst the quality of the collective worship provided by the school is good, the provision does not meet the statutory requirement that collective worship takes place on a daily basis.
28. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education has improved since the previous inspection, but is in need of further development; its links with the statutory subject of citizenship require clarification. Although the schemes of work cover requirements and limited resources are provided, including input from visiting speakers, there is no formalised monitoring to ensure the quality of delivery by form tutors. The quality of teaching is variable. Careers guidance is not effectively monitored to ensure that every pupil has a high quality experience. External providers, such as the Connexions careers guidance service, have contributed significantly through providing careers advice and individual guidance. Unfortunately, this service has been reduced and individual guidance is now only available on a referral system. Pupils in Year 11 benefit from a one-week work placement, and plans are in hand to rearrange this into the Year 10 programme. The vast majority of pupils wish to continue to higher education. Curricular provision in Years 10 and 11 serves this aim; for example, separate courses in physics, chemistry and biology meet pupils' aspirations and parents' wishes.



29. Curriculum provision for pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory. The school complies with the Code of Practice and all statements and reviews are up to date. All pupils enjoy full access to all the opportunities available. Specialist support staff are deployed to ensure that pupils' benefit from these opportunities. Supervised study options in Years 10 and 11 enable pupils to reduce the number of subjects studied and cope with coursework demands of subjects. The school makes appropriate arrangements for the support of the very few pupils for whom English is an additional language.
30. High and active participation in a very good, varied and challenging programme of extra-curricular activities enhances considerably the academic and all-round development of pupils of all backgrounds. It is a considerable strength and contributes substantially to the school's very good ethos and harmony. Many subjects run clubs and revision classes, as well as a broad range of visits. The music and drama departments produce a wide range of performances, which involve large numbers of pupils.
31. There is a good match of specialist teachers to the demands of the curriculum, with the exception of religious education. Here long-term planning and continuity are hampered by the other commitments of non-specialist teachers.
32. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall because of the tremendous efforts of the school to make the best of its limited space. The large amounts of grassed areas and unlimited access to all-weather athletics tracks provide very good physical education facilities for all pupils. The use of the library as an English classroom restricts access to the computers and books for other pupils, with the result that many reference books have been distributed around the school. At present, this resource is well below the standard of library provision in most secondary schools. Accommodation and resources are also unsatisfactory for the teaching of art. There is no kiln or access to computers and space is cramped. A proposed new building programme is to address deficiencies in both science and the shortage of areas where whole classes can use computers.
33. The governing body supports curriculum development and has responded successfully to some of the issues raised at the previous inspection. For example, a second modern foreign language has been introduced and religious education now meets statutory requirements. However, the structures, which allow senior managers to monitor and evaluate curriculum provision are still unclear.
34. Following recent designation as a specialist Science College there are, as yet, no identifiable benefits by which the governors can evaluate the impact of this across the curriculum.

## **Sixth Form**

35. The curriculum provision in the sixth form is satisfactory overall. In leading the formation and partnership of a post-16 arrangement with Beaufort Community School, Central Technology College and Ribston Hall High School, the school provides students with good access to a wide range of courses, both academic and vocational. Many courses have been introduced to broaden the opportunities and meet the needs and aspirations of students so that they can progress to further and higher education. The school offers a range of courses in the common option block, including statistics, music technology, French, German, drama and media studies. Although this level of innovation suggests a good ongoing curriculum review, there is a weakness in that governors do not formally evaluate the ongoing effects.
36. Many students participate well in a range of extra-curricular activities, including sport, performing arts, Young Enterprise and visits to places of interest. However, there is scope to broaden the range of enrichment experiences. There is no planned work experience but some students take the opportunity to visit local primary schools to enrich their educational experience and contribute to community service. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Social

facilities are less than welcoming and access to computers is restricted to a shared provision with science.

## Care, guidance and support

The school provides pupils with very good support, advice and guidance and makes satisfactory provision for their care, welfare, health and safety. It actively seeks and responds to the views of pupils.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Personal support, advice and guidance for its pupils.
- Very good arrangements exist for pupils joining the school in Year 7.
- A caring and safe environment.
- Pupils' views are sought, but more could be done to ensure this is done in a more rigorous manner.

### Commentary

37. Most form tutors get to know their pupils well as they accompany them throughout their time in the school. There is a small minority, however, who do not seem to have developed such a close relationship. In the registration periods, many were seen interacting well with pupils but some just took the register and left their charges to their own devices. The pastoral team, consisting primarily of heads of year and other key staff led by an assistant headteacher, works hard to ensure that pupils in need of support are identified early and their individual programmes are designed to address their particular situations. These are then regularly monitored with pupils and their parents are involved if appropriate. Barriers to a more consistent approach in pastoral care throughout the school exist in that staff consider that the time available for such work is insufficient to enable the quality of support and guidance which they try to provide. While they do have the services of a support worker one day a week, more could be done, such as using sixth-formers as learning mentors, something which is now being planned. Parents feel content that their children are well looked after while they are in the school.
38. Parents are overwhelmingly appreciative of the way the school helps its pupils to settle in to Year 7. Of the 159 OFSTED questionnaires that were returned not one disagreed with this observation. The school's pupils are drawn from around 40 primary schools. The headteacher and head of Year 7 visit as many as possible during the summer term to meet the pupils and discuss their personal and academic profiles with teachers. This, together with a residential course, provides the pupils with an excellent start to their new school.
39. The school is concerned about ensuring that its pupils are safe in the school. While no major hazards were observed during the inspection, the insufficient traffic control at the beginning and the end of the school day gives cause for concern. The school is aware of this and is seeking funding to resolve the situation. The persons with overall responsibility for health and safety, the business manager and chair of the governors' committee are relatively new to their posts. They are planning to develop further the health and safety systems and review the procedures for risk assessments to ensure a consistent approach throughout the school. Appropriate child protection procedures are in place with members of staff aware of their responsibilities. However, there should be more than one fully trained person within the school.
40. The views of pupils are sought through the working of school councils. While there is a separate one for the middle school, Years 7, 10 and 11 have to rely solely on the whole-school council for an opportunity to express their views. Attendance at its meetings averages only around 50 per cent and there is currently no system to enable the collation of pupils views via tutor groups, to be taken forward to them.
41. Pupils with special educational needs receive good guidance and support. The special educational needs co-ordinator communicates well with support agencies, such as the speech and language therapist and Connexions service, to ensure that additional support and

guidance is available for pupils with more severe needs. Assessment procedures are carried out efficiently. Individual education plans provide clear information to ensure that teachers are aware of pupils' needs. However, as at the time of the last inspection, targets are not specific enough to enable teachers or pupils to evaluate their progress precisely.

42. The needs of pupils from minority ethnic communities are catered for. Muslim pupils are allowed to use a classroom for lunchtime prayer, for example, and their needs during Ramadan are met. However, there is insufficient reference made to the cultures and achievements of members of minority groups to fully promote race equality and to develop all pupils' awareness in preparation for life in our multicultural and multi-ethnic society.

### **Sixth Form**

43. The system for providing personal support and guidance is not as well implemented as in the main school. One third of students who answered the OFSTED questionnaire did not feel there was an adult in the school whom they could turn to if they had a personal problem, but individual discussions with more than 40 students did not support this view in a single instance. Similarly, despite a significant number of respondents indicating that the school did not seek or respond to their views, and that they had not received helpful advice on what to study in the sixth form, direct discussion with students produced a reversal of this view. All students interviewed felt that the advice and guidance they had received prepared them fully for the demands and potential rewards of sixth form study, and they felt strongly that the advice and support they received from the teachers was unstinting and generous. Teachers, including the headteacher, guide students within a framework of interviews and discussions aimed at tracking their progress. In addition, individual teachers give support above and beyond the system, providing thoughtful and sensitive advice to students as and when they require assistance. It would appear that the school needs to improve communications with its students in order to alter the perceptions of some.

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

The school has developed a good relationship with its pupils, parents and carers. Links with the wider community and other schools and colleges are satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents are provided with a high level of information about the standards achieved and progress made by their children.
- Parents make a good contribution to their pupils' learning at school and at home.
- The school has developed a good relationship with its parents but needs to seek their views on a more regular basis.
- The use of links with the local community and other schools and colleges to enrich the learning of pupils is underdeveloped.

### **Commentary**

44. Parents are supplied with a regular flow of information concerning their children's academic progress. Reports issued four times a year include interim summaries and a full annual version. While these are generally good, there is no consistent approach to their layout and content between departments so that some are more informative than others. The system would benefit from a whole-school approach to producing these reports. Overall, the system of reports, in conjunction with the annual parents' meetings, is greatly appreciated by parents.
45. Most parents are actively involved in supporting their children's education. The school provides them with detailed information on coursework and they are contacted if deadlines are not met. Parents respond positively to this and most feel they are able to maintain effective contact with teachers through the homework diaries. They also feel very involved in the process for

choosing the options in Year 9. The Crypt School Association is well supported and raises considerable sums of money each year for the school.

46. The school does not carry out regular surveys of parents' views. However, it has formed a very good collaborative relationship with them in developing a concerted response to the local authority's education review which threatens the school's existence. Consequently, 86 per cent of those responding to the OFSTED questionnaire felt the school sought their views. It now needs to build on this relationship to give them a greater role in helping shape the future direction of the school.
47. Links with the community have improved since the last inspection, but there is still much to do to develop these to a level where they make a strong contribution to pupils' learning. Visitors from local organisations run sessions on topics such as drugs and alcohol awareness and crime and its consequences and the school has established links with many local companies through its work-experience programme. However, these are not seen by most subject departments as opportunities to arrange projects involving pupils visiting businesses, or their personnel, in return, working with the pupils in school. Similarly, whilst the school has a number of initiatives with other schools and colleges, such as its Science College partners and a partnership with a private school for gifted and talented pupils, these are yet to be fully developed.

### **Sixth Form**

48. Parents are regularly informed about their children's progress. Regular and frequent opportunities are offered to parents in the form of open evenings and parents' evenings for the separate year groups. These arrangements give the opportunity to identify and address any concerns in good time for the forthcoming examinations, but the opportunity was not fully taken in the current academic year due to timetabling problems and other issues concerned with the management of the sixth form. Students have good links with the community mainly as a result of having a teacher specifically responsible for developing them. They help with the local community association and have close links with a nearby residential home for the elderly. Visitors also inform them on a range of relevant issues as diverse as trading standards, student loans and living on a low budget. However, beneficial links with the business and education communities are limited.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The overall leadership and management of the school is **satisfactory**. Governors are supportive and have a strategic perspective; the headteacher provides clear direction for the school; the senior management team executes responsibilities efficiently but has yet to demonstrate the level of pro-activity required to drive the school forward; middle management is generally good and there are some very good role models within this tier.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The very good leadership of the headteacher.
- The drive to maintain and improve on already high standards is at the forefront.
- Monitoring of whole-school policies and cross-curricular activity is weak.
- Governors know the school's strengths and weaknesses well but do not monitor statutory compliance with sufficient rigour.
- The senior management team does not provide an effective link between the headteacher and middle managers.

## Commentary

49. Governors have a strong vision for the school's future and take a strategic approach to forward planning. They understand their role well and strive to provide the headteacher with active support without undue interference. They are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and they have set clear goals for improvement. There is an appropriate range of expertise amongst governors and this is well deployed throughout a committee structure. They seek to ensure that the school meets its statutory obligations, but there is a need for greater rigour in holding the school managers to account for the quality of some curricular provision. Although a system of linking governors to individual departments exists, and governors have participated in annual departmental reviews, this is an underdeveloped aspect of the governors' regular monitoring process.
50. The statutory requirement to hold a daily act of collective worship is not fully met in that it takes place only twice a week, but governors have taken a conscious decision to focus on the qualitative aspects of this, supplemented by activities in association with Gloucester Cathedral at key points in the calendar. It was the view of the inspection team that the whole-school assemblies did succeed in providing high quality collective worship. However, the provision of the subject of citizenship falls a long way short of meeting statutory requirements at present. There are also shortfalls in the statutory provision of ICT in Years 10 and 11, but current planning indicates that these will be remedied in September 2004.
51. The governors have a strong sense of the aspirations of parents and a determination to safeguard high academic standards. They know the school well, are sensitive and responsive to parents' concerns and are prepared to question the relevance of some national initiatives in the context of their school.
52. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school. He is committed to maintaining and improving standards whilst at the same time introducing new pedagogical approaches to move the school forward. His focus on 'educating the whole child' is one that parents strongly support, and he is driving forward a manifesto for change in a context where traditional practice held sway. A significant barrier to the pace of further improvement in this school has been the presence of pockets of staff who do not readily accept and follow the leadership of the school, or share the vision, thus undermining the management of change. The headteacher is currently creating an ethos and building a significant team of teachers who share his high aspirations for pupils, and support his drive for consistency, high standards and relevance.
53. The school's senior management team is committed to the future development of an already high achieving school, but lacks the strength necessary to support the headteacher's vision. They manage the school effectively on a day-to-day basis, but have not been able to institute or implement the systems necessary to secure consistency of implementation of whole-school initiatives, nor to secure the pace of improvement and change on which its development depends. This, in part, is due to lack of clarity about lines of accountability, but also to an inherent reluctance on their part to challenge the work of teachers and middle managers. They are insufficiently pro-active, and there is an over-reliance on task-driven activity at the expense of strategic management, and insufficiently frequent monitoring of performance. They have not as yet established for themselves the necessary authority to fulfil their role effectively. This is reflected in a partial dependency culture within which some staff demonstrate a reluctance to accept devolved authority. Members of the senior management team are aware of the curriculum, but not of the effectiveness of the activities that the school provides to promote learning within and beyond the school day, nor do they monitor the impact of teaching methods and pupil groupings either directly or indirectly through middle managers.
54. Appropriate policies for racial harmony and inclusion are effectively implemented. Good systems in place for the monitoring of pupil achievement contribute to the drive to raise standards, and steps have been instituted to promote new approaches to teaching and learning. The school's Advanced Skills Teacher (AST), and opportunities, such as the

implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy, have been used well to provide all staff with professional development, and systems are in place to link performance management to training needs of individuals. However, the oversight of subsequent implementation is weak and unco-ordinated, resulting in an 'opt in' or 'opt out' culture and little evidence of a corporate response. The performance management system does not adequately enable the monitoring of performance within the dual academic and pastoral responsibilities held by some middle managers.

55. Middle management is strong and generally effective. Heads of department and heads of year are afforded considerable autonomy and generally use this professionally and to good effect. Planning processes have developed throughout the school. Strategic priorities are shared with middle managers to help inform their own short-term development planning but there is a need for a greater whole-school focus in which curriculum, professional development and resource planning are co-ordinated. The involvement of governors in such planning from the outset would enhance the expertise available to the school and bring a wider vision to bear on future needs.
56. Leadership of the school's provision for pupils with special educational needs is very good. The co-ordinator provides very good support and advice for teachers and is increasing their awareness of ways in which they can meet pupils' special needs. As a result, support for these pupils, especially those with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, is improving. Appropriate priorities for the further development of support have been identified. The management of this provision is good, but time limitations have resulted in some omissions as, for example, that the special educational needs policy does not outline available resources, criteria for evaluating the success of the provision, or the school's complaints procedures for parents.
57. A small administrative team supports the professional staff well, and there is effective and efficient practice in the administration of examinations at every level. The use of ICT to support the administration of the school is not yet fully integrated, but problems with appropriate software are close to being resolved.
58. The Crypt School is an efficient and orderly place in which personal contact is a valuable contributor to communication. Parents and pupils consider the school to be well managed. The cycle of formal meetings and briefings is appropriate. Financial management, after a period of some concern, is now good and the school is well placed to restore its deficit budget ahead of schedule. Effective checks on departmental expenditure are in place, and the fabric of the school is generally clean, litter-free and maintained well. The principles of best value are well understood and applied. The school provides good value for money.

## **Sixth Form**

59. Overall leadership and management of the sixth form is satisfactory. The headteacher has a clear strategic vision of improving standards, and has been instrumental in driving standards up over the last four years. He has ensured that the statutory requirements for religious education are met. Innovative on-line curriculum developments have been trialled and evaluated. However, management of the sixth form is ineffective. Development planning is unclear, and the monitoring of the various systems which ensure smooth day-to-day functioning, and high achievement for all students, is not carried out with consistency or rigour. The management of individual subject areas and courses is inconsistent, and the internal structures to address these weaknesses are not in place. The governing body is very aware of the ethos and long tradition of the sixth form. It is very supportive of the leadership of the school, but does not challenge perceived wisdoms with sufficient rigour. It has been instrumental in ensuring that recent difficulties have been handled sensitively and positively.

## Financial information

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

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	2,271,480	Balance from previous year	-92,320
Total expenditure	2,155,739	Balance carried forward to the next	-73,930
Expenditure per pupil	3,198		

*Areas for further development include:*

- *clarification of lines of accountability;*
- *more systematic monitoring of whole-school policies and cross-curricular activity such as PSHE and citizenship;*
- *more rigorous monitoring by governors in connection with statutory requirements;*
- *more pro-active assumption and execution of devolved responsibilities on the part of the senior management team.*



# **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**

- Good leadership has brought about good improvement since the previous inspection and established an effective teaching team. Evaluation of the department's work is a strong feature.
- Teaching is good: pupils learn and achieve well, and standards are high as a result.
- Curriculum provision provides choice for pupils and good opportunities for enrichment.
- Library provision remains a problem, although this is an issue for the school as much as for the English department.

#### **Commentary**

60. In 2003, the performance of pupils in tests at the end of Year 9 was very high in comparison with the national median for pupils in their age group, representing very good achievement. Performance in comparison with selective grammar schools was well below average, largely because of the relatively weaker performance of pupils at Level 6 or higher. The comparison should be treated with caution because attainment on entry, although above average, is not as high as in other grammar schools. Performance in Year 9 tests has been consistently well above the national median in previous years. Results at GCSE were significantly above average in both English and English literature, and pupils' English results were significantly better than their performance in other subjects. Most pupils obtained a grade in the range A\*-C in both subjects, reflecting their good achievement in relation to their performance in Year 9 two years before.
61. Standards of work seen in this inspection were well above average at the end of Years 9 and 11. Pupils enter the school with above average attainment overall; they achieve well by the end of Year 9 to reach well above average standards and continue to achieve well to maintain these standards by the end of Year 11. The standard of speaking skills is a particularly strong feature of pupils' attainment. As they move through the school, their ability to give an extended reply to questions, to speak with clarity and use a good range of vocabulary becomes more apparent. This was observed in the classroom, in interviews and in informal conversations. In written work, careless mistakes in spelling and sentence punctuation can persist, however, and higher attaining pupils would benefit from writing more concisely with a focus on key points.
62. Pupils achieve well because they encounter a variety of interesting work that enables them to develop skills, including ICT, well, and gain good knowledge and understanding of set texts. Work is planned to meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and suitably challenging for gifted and talented pupils. Those from minority ethnic backgrounds participate fully in classroom activities. Good teaching ensures that all pupils receive effective help and encouragement through feedback in the classroom and marking of written work that explains thoroughly what they need to do to improve and sets suitable targets for improvement. Pupils' wider reading is fostered and they enjoy opportunities to write imaginatively as well as analytically. This is a pleasing feature of their written work. Taken together, these features explain why pupils achieve well in English.

63. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers manage pupils well through a combination of good humour and the expectation that pupils will work hard and attend carefully. They effectively develop speaking skills by giving pupils time to reply in an extended way to questions, suggesting alternatives to less appropriate responses or endorsing the better ones. Teachers vary activities and employ a range of methods so that pupils develop all the key subject skills and also their ICT capability well. In their approach to texts and through their relationships in the classroom, they encourage pupils to value the contribution of others and be aware of others' feelings. The 'pairing' of a confident pupil with a less confident one in a Year 11 class was a good example of this. Pupils are also learning to evaluate their own and others' work effectively. At times, teachers attempt too much in a lesson and thus do not review or consolidate learning sufficiently. Sometimes they do not take advantage of pupils' interest and involvement by adjusting lesson planning accordingly. Occasionally there is a lack of focus on key objectives. As a result, some lessons are not as productive as they could be. These, however, are minor weaknesses in an overall picture of good teaching.
64. Good leadership has formed an effective team with the common purpose of raising standards. The head of department has a clear grasp of strengths and weaknesses because of the way the department evaluates its work, and development planning is well focused. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Curriculum provision has been enhanced through the introduction of media studies and the opportunities pupils have for enrichment through theatre visits, poetry and other creative writing and drama club. Teaching quality and standards of achievement have been maintained.

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

65. Most subject departments make a good contribution to the development of pupils' language and literacy skills and standards are well above average as a result. Teachers emphasise the proper use of important subject vocabulary so that pupils learn to use it effectively themselves. In addition, across the school there is generally a high standard of speaking as a result of the opportunities pupils have to take part in question and answer sessions, discussions or presentations. Particularly high standards are expected in physical education and ICT, where accuracy, extended replies using appropriate technical language and good writing opportunities are strong features. In mathematics, music and religious education, literacy skills are less well developed. In these subjects, lack of consistency in approach, no strong emphasis on key vocabulary, or no overall strategy for development of literacy skills, including writing, result in limited opportunities to extend learning.

#### *Area for development*

- *Promote development of literacy skills across the curriculum through guidance and sharing best practice*

### **Modern foreign languages**

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

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

- Achievement in French is unsatisfactory, due to unsatisfactory teaching in Years 7 to 9.
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory and insufficient progress has been made since the last inspection.
- A good range of enrichment activities, including educational visits abroad, makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development.

### **Commentary**

66. In 2003, teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 indicated above average attainment. GCSE results in 2003 for both French and German were below the national average in relation to A\*-C grades, and well below the average for selective boys' schools. French results fell sharply from 2002.
67. Inspection evidence shows that standards in French by the end of Year 9 are well below expectations and that pupils are underachieving in relation to their capability. Pupils' attainment in German, which is studied for a year less, is similar to attainment in French. Pupils understand simple spoken and written sentences, for example where people are going to spend a day out and their opinion about the trip. When given the opportunity, they understand simple instructions, such as how to complete exercises, in the foreign language. However, from the earliest years, speaking is much weaker than listening; pupils are hesitant and lack confidence, pronunciation is frequently difficult to understand and, more importantly, vocabulary is not well memorised. Speaking and writing are often inaccurate and spelling is frequently unsatisfactory. Pupils do not have a firm grasp of grammar and some lack basic understanding of tenses and verbs in the foreign language. Often pupils do not understand the terminology used to describe grammar, for example 'reflexive verbs', and consequently cannot follow explanations. Reading is the best-developed skill and is satisfactory. Pupils read simple texts, for example about daily routines, and pick out relevant details accurately. There are few examples of very good or excellent work in either language. Pupils' achievement in French is unsatisfactory, particularly for the most able pupils, as progress is slow and for many pupils, learning is not secure. Progress in German is faster and achievement is satisfactory.
68. Attainment in Years 10 and 11 is around the average for all schools but below average for selective boys' schools in both languages. GCSE coursework, which is redrafted several times, is prepared well. Pupils produce extended writing, for example a description of their home town, which improves from simple, inaccurate sentences to lengthy, sophisticated pieces of writing, containing a range of tenses, and good linking phrases. Pupils speak more confidently, although still inaccurately, about the topics they have prepared, than they do for class work. Pupils read competently, although pronunciation in reading aloud is very variable. Achievement is satisfactory. Prepared work is of a much higher standard than spontaneous language production.
69. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in German. They are unsatisfactory in French in Years 7 to 9, because insufficient opportunities are provided for pupils to consolidate their learning before moving on to more complex work, a narrow range of activities is used to embed learning, the pace of lessons is slow and pupils are allowed to adopt a casual attitude to their work. Use of French for the conduct of the lesson is limited and pupils are not encouraged to respond at length or with accuracy. Lessons lack appropriate challenge and rigour. In some lessons, relationships between teacher and pupils are strained and a number of pupils throughout the school have negative attitudes to language learning.
70. Teaching of French and German is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In both languages, the purpose of the lesson is clearly explained to pupils and progress reviewed at the end, so pupils can gauge their progress. All teachers have good knowledge of their subjects and provide good models for pupils to copy. In some lessons, pupils have good opportunities to hear the foreign language and to develop their listening skills, particularly in German. Lessons proceed with pace, although there is insufficient insistence on concentration during individual tasks and pupils are frequently casual in their attitudes. Brief or inaccurate oral responses to questions are often accepted so pupils work fairly conscientiously, but not at full stretch. In Years 10 and 11, preparation for the newly introduced modular course is thorough and is contributing to raising standards.
71. Leadership and management of the modern languages department are unsatisfactory. Since the last inspection, the department has had an unsettled time, with several staff changes and long-term absences. Recently, there has been a number of positive changes, such as the introduction of a modular GCSE, which is beginning to have a positive impact. The acting, part-

time head of department is working hard to continue these improvements but has not had the necessary support or training. Key issues, such as the quality of teaching and achievement in Years 7 to 9 French, have not been addressed since the last inspection and therefore improvement is unsatisfactory. A wide range of enrichment activities are offered to pupils, including the opportunity to study Russian at lunch time and foreign educational visits which make a good contribution to pupils' cultural development.

#### *Areas for development*

- *Improve the quality of classroom management and teaching in French in Years 7 to 9*
- *Provide more constructive guidance for pupils about how to improve written work*

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teaching ensures that pupils achieve well.
- Pupils benefit from very good support outside lessons.
- Good collaborative working helps pupils to develop their understanding.
- Departmental self-evaluation and target setting are not sufficiently developed.
- There should be a more co-ordinated, whole-school approach to developing mathematical skills, in order to improve pupils' learning.

### **Commentary**

72. In 2003, the test results at the end of Year 9 were very high when compared with all schools, but were below average compared with selective boys' schools. GCSE results were also very high when compared with all schools, but below average for similar schools. An analysis of these test and examination results shows a rising trend of improvement. Standards observed during the inspection were well above average, and suggest that recent improvements can be sustained.
73. Given pupils' level of attainment when they enter the school, their achievement is good, and this is directly attributable to good teaching and learning. Whilst recent examination results at GCSE suggest underachievement by the most able pupils, observations during the inspection suggest that these pupils now progress well.
74. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers make use of their good subject knowledge to ask probing questions, and to focus on key areas of difficulty. As a result, pupils take an active part in lessons and they suggest ideas readily. Teachers plan their lessons appropriately, leading to well-structured lessons where pupils maintain concentration. Pupils work together very well, and support each other in their learning. Learning is most effective when pupils verbalise their ideas in discussion, either in pairs or with the whole class. Not all teaching is of a consistently good standard. In some lessons, the quality of the teacher's visual aids in demonstrating geometrical ideas is inadequate and, as a result, pupils do not learn as well. The use of homework to consolidate work covered in class is satisfactory.
75. In-class assessment is strong and helps pupils to learn effectively. There is a good system of monitoring their progress against national standards, and they are aware of their individual targets. Marking of pupils' books is satisfactory overall, but it is inconsistent between teachers, and occasionally it is insufficiently rigorous.
76. The leadership of the department is satisfactory. The head of department is a good role model for staff and pupils. He is committed to improving standards, and demonstrates this by

providing, along with other staff, very good support for pupils outside lessons. Teaching styles, especially in the use of ICT, are developing. Currently, action planning is not sufficiently developed, and departmental targets have too narrow a focus. Whilst the monitoring of teaching within the department has begun, this should be developed further, as part of a more rigorous programme of monitoring and sharing good practice.

77. There has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection, particularly in the quality of teaching and the willingness to embrace more varied teaching styles, but there has been insufficient improvement in the quality of written feedback to pupils.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

78. Pupils throughout the school have the mathematical skills necessary for the work they do in all their subjects. These skills are used and developed well in some subjects. For example, in both design and technology and geography, pupils are able to present and interpret statistical data with understanding, and in ICT lessons they develop their algebraic understanding through using formulae in spreadsheets. However, there is insufficient co-ordination of a whole-school approach to developing mathematical skills. Initial training has been provided, and policies written, but there is insufficient monitoring of the work that takes place, its impact on learning and sharing of good practice.

#### *Areas for development*

- *Delegation of responsibilities within the department as part of a programme of staff development*
- *Sharing good practice more by means of, for example, peer observations and joint planning*

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Provision for Years 7 to 9 is good and leads to good progress.
- Relationships are good and pupils contribute with confidence.
- Attainment at the end of Year 11 in chemistry continues to be well below average.
- Not enough pupils are attaining the higher levels and grades.

### **Commentary**

79. In 2003 the results at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average compared to all schools but well below when compared to other boys' selective schools. Building on lower levels on entry, these results represent good value added and are a considerable improvement on the previous year. The number of pupils attaining higher levels is low compared, for example, with those in mathematics at the school.
80. In 2003, GCSE results at the end of Year 11 varied considerably between the subjects of the triple award. In biology, results were in line with the national averages of both selective and maintained schools; in physics they were just below; in chemistry they were well below national averages. The numbers of pupils attaining the highest levels were below average in biology and well below in both physics and chemistry.
81. Pupils are particularly good at contributing relevant ideas and knowledge to discussion of a topic, doing so with confidence and fluency. In well-organised and managed investigations, they work well together and demonstrate very good investigative skills. Their numeracy skills are good and graph work is of a high quality. However, a significant number of pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, show that they are not building a secure knowledge base.

Whilst students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, the more able in science need to be given more opportunities to extend their knowledge and understanding.

82. Overall, the teaching is good. Of the lessons observed, all but one was satisfactory or better and one was excellent. The best lessons were characterised by good structure and management, the use of challenging and involving approaches, good variety and pace and high expectations that the pupils give their full attention. The one unsatisfactory lesson lacked too many of these qualities and pupils lost concentration with the result that behaviour deteriorated. Homework is set regularly and is used mainly to reinforce learning. Additional tasks which enable pupils to develop their interest in science, extend their writing and develop understanding are needed. This is particularly the case in Years 10 and 11 where an over-concentration on learning for examinations may be counter productive and de-motivate some pupils. Assessment procedures are good, with work being marked consistently and comments being used to indicate how to improve. For Years 7, 8 and 9, systems for setting pupils' individual targets are very good and result from effective liaison between the pastoral and academic managers. Particularly good achievement is recognised through a rewards system. The good provision of extra-curricular activities adds value to many pupils' experience of science teaching.
83. Each member of the science department holds some responsibility. On the whole, this devolved management system works well but there is a need for systems of quality control to be put in place. Staff are very well qualified and work collaboratively, supported effectively by a small team of laboratory technicians. The school's newly achieved specialist Science College status now needs to be used to raise standards further and to realise the potential of ICT in support of teaching and learning. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

#### *Areas for development*

- *Raise the profile of science throughout the school to underpin the Science College status*
- *Increase the use of ICT in support of learning*

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in ICT is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are good overall.
- Pupils' attitudes towards the subject are good.
- Assessment is effective.
- Some pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not receive their full entitlement to ICT.
- Many subjects provide opportunities for pupils to use ICT but it is insufficient to meet requirements for ICT provision and assessment in Years 10 and 11.

### **Commentary**

84. Results in 2003 were broadly average when compared with all secondary schools but well below when compared with selective boys' grammar schools. The 2003 GCSE results reflect unsatisfactory achievement for too many pupils, particularly at the higher grades. Current standards, however, do not reflect these results and are in line with the average standards in selective boys' grammar schools. The work seen during the inspection indicates good achievement with rapidly improving standards. Pupils' ICT skills on entry to the school are average but they soon become confident users of ICT. By the end of Year 9 they show good skills in using a wide range of computer applications and by Year 11 very good skills are evident, including using the Internet to research and present work. Lower attaining pupils achieve in line with their capability. Pupils' coursework is filed loosely in folders and shows a

general lack of structure and some untidiness. Better filed and presented work would provide stimulating examples for other pupils to aspire to.

85. Teaching and learning are good. There are very good features in many lessons. The work is well planned and challenging. Year 11 pupils speak highly of the support, guidance and time offered by their teachers to enable them to reach their full potential. Good humour prevails in lessons and a brisk and purposeful approach to work is commonplace. Gifted and talented pupils are challenged to produce higher quality outcomes in all their work. GCSE coursework assessment is good, providing pupils with constructive comments that inform them of what they need to do to improve. Teachers provide good opportunities and support for pupils to use the ICT facilities before school, at lunchtimes and at the end of the school day. This is helping those pupils who need more support to improve their skills and to complete coursework. Although teaching is good, there is no formal structure within the department to monitor teaching and learning and to share good practice. There is also a need to embrace enhanced interactive teaching styles and approaches that are acknowledged to be successful in motivating pupils and raising standards.
86. Leadership and management are good. A good start has been made in auditing and evaluating the provision and planning for the future. Clear direction for developing the subject has been established. Good relationships and mutual respect between ICT staff support their work to improve standards. An assessment system has been introduced in Years 7 to 9 and provides pupils with a clear indication of their National Curriculum levels and how well they are doing. The school recognises the need to fulfil its statutory entitlement issues relating to ICT for Years 10 and 11 and has planned for all Year 10 pupils to follow an ICT examination course in the next academic year. Increased accommodation and resources have been secured to enable this provision to be implemented. Technical support is good. Improvement since the previous inspection is therefore good overall.

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

87. All subjects include ICT in their schemes of work but some are unable to teach the programme fully due to lack of easy access to specialist rooms and resources. Most pupils use ICT well to develop their coursework and show good skills in researching topics using the Internet and specialist databases to arrive at judgements. Day-to-day use in classrooms is restricted in some subjects despite the availability of computers in the classroom. This varied practice means that the use of ICT across the curriculum is deemed to be only satisfactory with some good features, for example in English, geography and religious education. The use of ICT in art is unsatisfactory.

#### *Areas for development*

- *Ensure statutory entitlement to ICT teaching is provided for all pupils in Years 10 and 11*
- *Establish systematic monitoring of teaching in order to share good practice*

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **very good**.

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

- High standards of attainment at GCSE.
- A widening range of teaching and learning styles to promote pupils' achievement.
- The popularity of geography as an option choice at GCSE.
- Insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their enquiry skills through fieldwork.





## Commentary

88. In 2002 and 2003, GCSE results were well above the national average, but slightly below the average for selective boys' schools. They were also above the results in other subjects in the school. This represents good achievement for pupils of all abilities. Standards in the current Year 11 are well above the national average. Pupils show an increasing knowledge and understanding of geographical terminology. All can describe and explain geographical processes, such as the multiplier effect, citing case studies to back up their explanations. Their knowledge of their case studies is a strength. The very highest attainers show an understanding of the complex interrelationships between people and the environment.
89. Standards in the current Year 9 are well above national expectations. This represents good achievement for all pupils. Pupils of all abilities show increasing confidence in using appropriate geographical terminology when describing such processes as erosion. Teaching is firmly focused on the accurate use of geographical terms in all lessons, with pupils keeping accurate glossaries. Pupils' enquiry skills are developing well and their independent learning skills are supported by the investigations they undertake in each year. These skills would be further enhanced by greater fieldwork opportunities and is recognised as an area for improvement by the department. The pupils' wider geographical place knowledge is very well developed.
90. The quality of teaching is good overall, and some very good teaching was also observed. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good. Questioning is purposeful and pupils respond positively and work with interest. They respond well to some of the new methods being used.
91. Assessment procedures are effective. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are given targets that relate to the geography National Curriculum levels and are developing the ability to assess their own performance. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are compiling very good notes and have a very good understanding of examination requirements. They know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
92. Leadership and management are very good. Good improvements have been made since the last inspection. Standards at the end of Year 9 have risen and there is now an effective system of assessment. Teaching and learning are effectively monitored. Teachers in the department are willing to develop new ideas and have minimised the potential disruption to learning resulting from long-term staff absence. Increasing use is made of ICT to support pupils' learning.

### *Areas for development*

- *Continue to share the existing good practice within the department*
- *Continue with the revisions to schemes of work for Years 7 to 9, building on the success of the global citizens module in Year 9*

## History

Provision in history is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teaching is leading to good learning.
- Enthusiasm of pupils for the subject.
- Good opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning.
- Higher grade attainment is below the average for selective boys' schools.

## Commentary

93. At GCSE in 2003, pupils' results were well above the national average and in line with those for similar selective boys' schools, except at the very highest grades. This was an improvement on the results in 2002. The department has analysed the reasons for this pattern of performance and has made effective changes to their teaching. Standards in the current Year 11 are well above the national average. This represents good achievement for the majority of pupils of all abilities. Pupils demonstrate a very detailed knowledge and very good understanding of the subject. All can describe and explain complex historical problems, such as the decisions facing Britain's leaders during the First World War. Their ability to use historical sources is equally well developed. Pupils are compiling very good notes that will be valuable for revision purposes. History is a very popular option choice, which pupils clearly enjoy very much.
94. Standards in the current Year 9 are well above national expectations. This represents good achievement for all pupils. Pupils of all abilities demonstrate increasing knowledge and understanding of events and people in the past. In all years, they respond well to the opportunities they are given to work independently and to the imaginative tasks given.
95. The quality of teaching overall is good in Years 7 to 9 and GCSE, with some very good and excellent teaching observed. In an excellent Year 11 lesson, pupils rose to the intellectual challenge of trying to explain the reasons why the Cold War began. They worked with a wide range of ideas and sources, considered the motives and attitudes of the leaders involved and developed a number of possible explanations. The combination of a challenging historical problem, intense time pressure and probing questioning led to excellent learning. Relationships between teachers and pupils are very good, creating a classroom atmosphere where pupils are willing to try out their ideas with confidence. Pupils respond particularly positively to the well-planned and fast-paced lessons, working with interest. Teachers frequently give pupils the essential factual information about events that they need so that more time can be spent thinking about and developing understanding. Very good use is being made of such techniques as concept maps and people graphs. Assessment is very thorough. Pupils have precise targets to help them to improve their history. Teachers work hard to ensure that pupils understand the assessment requirements of the final examination.
96. The leadership and management of history are very good. The teachers of history are committed to their work and a number of significant improvements have been made since the last inspection. There is now an effective system of teacher assessment of pupil attainment by the end of Year 9. A much wider variety of teaching and learning activities is now being used which meets the needs of individual pupils. There is currently no formal monitoring of teaching and learning. The use of ICT in history has improved, particularly through greater opportunities for pupils to present their historical conclusions.

### *Areas for development*

- *Develop opportunities to use ICT in support of whole-class teaching when data projection facilities become easily available*
- *Reinforce pupils' understanding of the need for selecting from their extensive historical knowledge when answering examination questions*

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The standards attained by pupils are good.
- Skills such as investigation, analysis and interpretation are taught well.

- Imaginative teaching encourages pupils to be creative and thoughtful in their response to religious and moral issues.
- Assessment of pupils' learning and identification of targets in Years 7 to 9 is limited.
- The department is relatively isolated from whole-school activity.

### **Commentary**

97. The standards attained by pupils are above the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. In Years 7 to 9, pupils develop very good analytical and interpretative skills and are able to express their ideas effectively through a variety of media. Their knowledge and understanding about different religious traditions is good. In Years 10 and 11, those pupils who opt to take full GCSE in religious education attain high standards especially in their coursework; this reflects high level research, analytical and evaluative skills. Those pupils who take the shorter GCSE course are able to articulate coherently and debate carefully major issues such as global inequalities and the sanctity of life. Pupil achievement is satisfactory at both key stages.
98. Teaching in religious education is good. Pupils' learning is also good. Teaching is characterised by high expectations and good progress is made in all lessons. Pupils are encouraged to be creative and imaginative in articulating their response to religious and moral issues and the development of their understanding and skills is very good. Pupils are confident in using the Internet as a resource for investigative work both for GCSE coursework and for class work in Years 7 to 9.
99. The assessment of pupils' work for examination courses is very good, with clear feedback given regarding areas for improvement. However, in Years 7 to 9, feedback given to pupils is not sufficiently detailed to identify strengths and areas for development and pupils are not aware of how well they are doing or what they should do to improve.
100. The internal leadership of the department is satisfactory. It has been hampered by staff absence and lack of staffing continuity from year to year, resulting in teaching by non-specialists. This militates against whole-team planning and the sharing of ideas and examples of successful practice. Too much is reliant on ad hoc encounters between staff. It also adversely affects the ability to develop long-term plans. There is a good understanding of the areas for development and, despite difficulties, there is sharing across the department. However, there is only limited recognition of whole-school development issues and of the department's role in supporting these.
101. The management of the department is good, and the work of the department as a whole is effectively monitored. Planning is good and well shared. A large grant towards resources from an outside organisation has been obtained and this means that resources available to the department are good.
102. Very significant improvements have been made since the last inspection. The statutory requirements for the delivery of religious education in the sixth form are now met and the time allowance for religious education in Years 10 and 11 has increased to allow the full and proper delivery of the curriculum, including both short and long course GCSEs. The progress made by pupils is now good in both key stages.

### *Areas for development*

- *Improve the assessment procedures to provide constructive guidance for pupils in Years 7 to 9*
- *Increase involvement in the implementation of whole-school initiatives*

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

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

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and classroom management, resulting in positive behaviour and attitudes.
- Improved use of ICT which needs to be extended further and across the department.
- Extra-curricular opportunities are very good.
- Monitoring of teaching is insufficiently focused on how pupils are learning.
- Standards in GCSE electronics are unsatisfactory.

#### Commentary

103. There is no evidence available to indicate standards in design and technology on entry. Scrutiny of work indicates that standards are at best similar to national averages. During the first three years, pupils make good gains in their knowledge and understanding of the various disciplines within design and technology and by the end of Year 9, pupils' attainment is above that expected for their age. Design skills are well developed through projects. Designing is imaginative but sketching as an element in the development of a design is comparatively weak and this slows design fluency. Skills development in the making aspects is satisfactory. Pupils do not always recognise and use knowledge and skills acquired in earlier work to inform increasingly more demanding designing and making activities in new situations. The impact of ICT is beginning to show in improved standards of work, notably the Year 9 computer-aided design and manufacture of clocks.
104. Teachers provide good additional support for those identified with special educational needs ensuring that their performance matches that of others in the class.
105. GCSE results have remained similar to the overall school average at the higher grades A\*-C, with the exception of 2003. Here, results showed some decline, most significantly in electronics, mainly because pupils did not complete their project work. During the inspection some examples of particularly good work was seen in all specialisms, and achievement is good by Year 11. Higher attaining pupils produce work that shows detailed research, good design skills and techniques, consideration of the views of their clients and completion of good products. Where the work is weaker, it is mainly due to limited presentational skills, little development of ideas or incomplete work.
106. Teaching and learning are good overall. Satisfactory lessons had some good features, but in some instances the pace was too slow and the focus for the lesson directed towards the task at the expense of developing learning to the depth and breadth expected. The use of ICT to build on pupils' understanding is developing but further provision for work using computer-aided design and making is needed. Literacy strategies are emphasised and pupils are positively encouraged to use appropriate technological vocabulary. Pupils' work is regularly marked and assessed, including constructive comments and targets for improvement. Teachers do not always make enough use of this assessment information and what has been learnt during lessons to help plan for future lessons. Evaluation is, at times, left until the end of the unit of work rather than using it to make modifications as the work proceeds.
107. Leadership of the department is good. There is a clear vision of how to raise achievement of pupils. Joint planning for development should include all areas identified in short-, medium- and long-term strategic planning with clearly identified, measurable outcomes and interim milestones to monitor progress. Management is satisfactory overall, with some good elements. Despite the regular informal monitoring of teaching, it needs to be more sharply

focused on how pupils are learning and good practice shared more widely. The commitment of the staff to running extra-curricular activities is highly commendable and has a positive impact on standards.

108. The subject has made satisfactory progress since the last inspection. The staffing situation has changed significantly over the last two years and this comparatively new team is beginning to work effectively together. It is therefore well placed to improve further.

#### *Areas for development*

- *Increase the use of ICT throughout the department*
- *Develop strategies to monitor and secure the completion of examination coursework within deadlines*

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

Provision in art is **satisfactory**.

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

- Good teaching.
- A wide range of media and enrichment activities are made available to pupils.
- Effective leadership is having an impact on raising standards.
- Insufficient opportunity to develop independence in learning.

#### **Commentary**

109. Standards of achievement are broadly average in Years 7 to 9 and at GCSE. Although GCSE results in 2003 were below the national average, and well below the average for selective schools, in recent years they have been above the national average. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 judged pupils to be well above the national average.
110. Standards seen in the current Year 9 are in line with the national average. Pupils have made satisfactory progress since Year 7. Their paintings in the style of Picasso show that their painting skills are effective and they understand colour theory, but their development of ideas is immature. In Year 11, pupils have developed competent and confident skills in painting and drawing. However, they do not link their research and exploration together sufficiently to show the development towards their final piece. Overall, they reach standards in line with the national average, and their progress since Year 9 is satisfactory.
111. Effective teaching results in good learning. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers make good use of displays in lessons, helping pupils to understand key points and new techniques. Where these include specific learning objectives, pupils achieve well. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to provide very intense support to pupils in lessons. Sometimes, this rather direct teaching limits pupils' independence in trying to put into practice newly learned skills. This results in achievement during lessons often being higher than outside lessons. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to use computers to manipulate images, particularly in Years 7 to 9. Assessment is well used to support learning, especially in Years 10 and 11. Teachers provide detailed advice in their marking. Well-designed coursework assessment sheets allow pupils to know their grade, and what they need to do to improve their work. Additionally, the use of writing frames helps pupils know how to structure their written work, which allows pupils with special educational needs to achieve as well as other pupils. Teachers create a positive learning environment, and pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils enjoy

their art lessons, and many continue with their work during lunchtimes and after school. Pupils who are behind with coursework are expected to attend these sessions.

112. Current leadership of the department is good. A large number of improvements have been put in place in a very short time. The subject has been given a higher profile in the school, and this has increased the numbers of pupils choosing to study it in Years 10 and 11. The school's data has been used to identify weaknesses, and action is being taken to raise achievement. Effective schemes of work have been written, which provide a good range of media, and are well structured. However, the schemes of work for pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not reflect the statutory requirements for ICT. There is no regular formal monitoring of teaching and learning to evaluate the impact of new developments or share good practice. There are many opportunities for pupils to take part in a varied range of enrichment activities. There are regular visits to museums and galleries, as well as arts week when local artists work with pupils.
113. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. Although a new art room was built after the previous inspection, it is too cramped for large-scale work. When sixth form students are working at the same time as other classes, it is distracting for all. Funding for art is insufficient, and leads to limited resources. There is no technician, which results in teachers using their time cleaning and organising materials.
114. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. All of the weaknesses have been addressed, although accommodation remains a shortcoming.

#### *Area for improvement*

- *Institute systematic monitoring and evaluation of practice*

## **Drama**

Provision in drama is **good**.

### **Commentary**

115. Pupils have timetabled drama lessons in Years 7 to 9 and can choose to study the subject further at GCSE and AS/A-level.
116. In sampled lessons in Years 9 and 11, teaching was good overall and pupils were learning and achieving well as a result. Pupils work well together and, particularly by Year 11, are able to evaluate and refine their tasks well. They learn and use appropriate subject vocabulary. Although some lack confidence in sustaining a role in Year 9, by Year 11 they can switch roles confidently, show good awareness of an audience, move well and speak clearly. Their drama skills are above average overall at this stage, representing good achievement.
117. Teachers develop skills well by their good subject knowledge, supportive suggestions and constructive criticism. In a lively Year 9 class, the teacher conveyed a strong sense of the serious purpose of the lesson and ensured that satisfactory learning took place. In Year 11, good independent learning took place as a result of the teacher's high expectations of, and supportive relationship with, pupils.
118. The hall and stage, although somewhat dated and with unappealing decor, provide spacious and well-resourced drama accommodation. The drama studio is unsatisfactory because of its congested entrance, limited working space, low ceiling and shabby appearance. Its conditions do not give the subject the status it deserves and do not help pupils perceive that they and their work are valued. Teachers nevertheless manage the difficult circumstances well, and drama makes a significant contribution to the life of the school. The subject is led and managed well, and standards are rising as a result.

#### *Area for development*

- *Improve the environment of the drama studio*

## **Music**

Provision in music is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teaching results in good learning in Years 7 to 11.
- Enrichment of musical education by provision for extra-curricular activities.
- Good vision for the development of the school's music.
- Pupils' independent learning is restricted where it is over-directed.

### **Commentary**

119. Pupils enter the school with wide ranging musical skills, and the above average standards demonstrated at the end of Year 9 represent good achievement and progress. GCSE results in 2003 were below average but marked a significant improvement over recent years. Standards in the current Year 11 are above average, representing good achievement for the very small cohort of pupils involved. Throughout Years 7 to 11, pupils demonstrate good theoretical knowledge of music, including fluent use of staff notation. They perform on keyboard with assurance. Compositions are imaginative and fluent in a range of styles. Listening skills are acute but evaluative skills are more variable in quality. Pupils taking instrumental lessons reach high standards. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as others. Those deemed talented in music achieve well.
120. Pupils make good progress in music because they experience good teaching. Classroom management is to a high standard and provides a very positive, well-disciplined but good-humoured learning environment in which pupils are well supported. Pupils learn well due to well-planned lessons that offer an integrated music curriculum. Work is well marked and teachers' comments show clearly how pupils might improve their work. Electronic keyboards are well used to support creative work. In a minority of lessons, opportunities to challenge pupils further by focused questioning are missed, and independent learning is impeded where lessons are too teacher led. Many pupils benefit from the good quality of teaching provided by visiting instrumental staff.
121. The quality of subject leadership and management is good. The new subject leader has quickly raised both the standards and the profile of the department. The development plan is well conceived and identifies appropriate intentions. Pupils benefit from the significant investment made in music technology provision. Visiting teachers are well managed. The department provides a good range of extra-curricular music that enriches the life of the whole school. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous report, particularly in the quality of subject management and the use of ICT.

#### *Areas for development*

- *Strengthen the multicultural dimension within the Years 7 to 9 curriculum*
- *Review the impact of teaching styles on pupils' learning*

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good teaching leads directly to very good learning.

- Very good leadership and management.
- Very high standards at GCSE.
- Very good attitudes and motivation of pupils underpin good achievement.

## Commentary

122. Standards at GCSE are very good. In 2003, ten pupils gained A\* grades. Pupils enter the school with higher standards than are expected nationally. Standards for all pupils are even further above the national expectation when they leave the school. This represents very good achievement over time.
123. All pupils achieve well up to the end of Year 9, and levels of knowledge and understanding are clearly above average. Pupils are able to perform skilfully in a range of games and aesthetic activities. They have a good understanding of health-related fitness and they know how and why to warm up before exercise. They can engage effectively in games of rugby, and can all execute clearing out, presentation and lifting skills around the ruck. They are rapidly developing their ball control skills in hockey. They can offer very pertinent suggestions about how to improve the quality of their own and others' work. Pupils with special educational needs make similar progress to their peers.
124. By the end of Year 11, standards continue to be above the national average, as pupils build on the strong foundations of earlier years. Pupils achieve very well in a wide range of activities in lessons. As tactical awareness develops alongside technical skills, pupils are able to make effective decisions in offensive and defensive situations, and can accurately officiate activities. They work safely and learn well when not directly under the supervision of a teacher.
125. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. All teachers have secure knowledge and are enthusiastic in their delivery. Class management is never less than good, giving all pupils the opportunity to engage successfully in lessons. Very good knowledge of how individual pupils learn best leads to very good progress for all pupils. The use of shared learning objectives, allied to very searching questions which probe pupils' understanding and knowledge, ensures consistency and progression. Pupils work hard and they learn well consistently. Pupils of all ages are encouraged through high quality teaching to develop their physical skills to the highest possible levels. Teachers provide pupils with a great many opportunities outside normal school hours to refine, extend and apply the full range of their skills and interests.
126. Pupils respond with total commitment to the exciting environment created by purposeful and stimulating teaching. They are very well turned out and are very positive about the subject. They pay close attention to teachers' guidance, and work with energy and enthusiasm. Relationships and behaviour are very good and contribute strongly to very good overall progress in lessons.
127. Curriculum leadership is very good. The department has a clear vision of the standards it wishes to achieve, and knows how it intends to reach these standards. Relationships within the young and energetic staff group are excellent, and they make a well-balanced team. They support each other well, and work with commitment to the pupils and the subject. They are consistent in their challenge and support, and contribute significantly to the ethos, work and life of the school. Pupils are directly involved in detailed modular assessments which provide information on pupils' standards, although not always with complete accuracy. This information is used for target setting, to inform curriculum developments, and to support the planning of teaching. However, initial measuring of what pupils can do on entry to the school is imprecise and lacks reliability. This undermines the ability of the department to know how well all pupils are actually progressing in their early years.
128. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Strong aspects have been maintained and areas noted for improvement have been addressed. The quality of teaching has improved, and



all work is carried out safely. Pupils' planning and evaluation skills are now very good. The subject is clearly a strength of the school.

#### *Areas for improvement*

- *Develop a procedure to measure pupils' generic physical skills on entry to the school*
- *Take full account of pupils' understanding and knowledge, as well as skill levels, when measuring their achievements*

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

The school provides programmes in PSHE and citizenship. Citizenship was inspected in depth. Some lessons in PSHE were sampled in Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11. Provision overall is unsatisfactory. The schemes of work cover requirements, including relationships and sex education, teaching about alcohol, drug and solvent abuse, and include guidance on self-awareness and goal-setting supplemented by input from visiting speakers. However, there is no formalised monitoring to ensure the quality of delivery by form tutors and the quality of teaching is variable. Since the last inspection, there have been improvements in the programme and its organisation but there is no systematic oversight of the consistency and quality of delivery through the pastoral system. This is a deficiency which needs attention.

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **unsatisfactory**.

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

- The school's wider citizenship culture is rich in potential opportunities for active citizenship.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are very good.
- Planning is inadequate and the statutory requirements are not fully covered.
- Assessment procedures are insufficiently developed.
- Standards are below those expected and achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Monitoring of the citizenship curriculum, teaching and learning is not in place.

### **Commentary**

129. The school has planned to teach citizenship partly within the PSHE programme, and partly through other subjects. An audit has been carried out to establish which subjects cover elements of citizenship. However, a coherent, overall scheme of work is yet to emerge and the coverage is too patchy and incomplete, delivery being still largely implicit and not effectively co-ordinated. The first two elements of citizenship – knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens and developing skills of communication and enquiry – are only partially covered. For the third element, there is no programme that ensures that all pupils have opportunities to develop their skills of participation and responsible action within school and the wider community. As a result, standards are below those expected and achievement is unsatisfactory at the end of Years 9 and 11.
130. The very good general ethos of the school does provide opportunities for selected groups of pupils to exercise responsibility. For example, some good work was seen in a whole-school council meeting led by a member of the senior management team. The eight pupils in attendance were fully involved and considered issues in a mature and relaxed way. Representatives to the active middle school council discuss pupils' concerns and substantial sums of money are raised for charity. These examples, and many others, can be used and built on when the school develops its active citizenship programme, along with an assessment strategy for the subject. The booklet to record pupils' evidence for citizenship, produced by the local education authority working party, of which the school's citizenship co-ordinator is a

member, is not yet in use, but will be useful once the procedures for assessment are established.

131. Judgements cannot be made about teaching and learning since no citizenship lessons could be seen. Citizenship was not a planned feature of any of the six PSHE lessons observed during the inspection, although it was noted that, as part of a designated citizenship module, an external speaker has recently been into school to talk to Year 10 pupils about youth crime.
132. Overall, the leadership and management of citizenship are unsatisfactory because planning is inadequate and there are no arrangements to monitor what is being taught and standards attained. There is no scheme of assessment through which pupils' standards and achievements can be reported to parents at the end of Year 9. The lack of direct oversight at senior management level is a barrier to securing the delivery of the cross-curricular elements of citizenship with sufficient rigour.

*Areas for development*

- *Structure the delivery plans for the various strands explicitly to provide more guidance for tutors*
- *Institute systematic monitoring and evaluation of the teaching and learning to secure consistency of experience for pupils*

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

### *Level 3 GCE AS level courses*

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Accounting	6	100	N/A	0.0	N/A	25.0	N/A
Business studies	5	100	76.4	40.0	16.3	44.0	26.2
Biology	9	89	65.2	22.0	11.1	30.0	20.6
Chemistry	3	100	72.7	33.3	13.9	40.0	24.1
Computing	7	57	N/A	0.0	N/A	17.1	N/A
English literature	6	100	85.9	16.6	19.1	33.3	30.2
Further mathematics	5	100	N/A	20.0	N/A	30.0	N/A
General studies	57	100	73.9	36.8	17.8	41.6	25.7
Geography	4	100	74.3	50.0	19.8	42.5	26.5
Law	1	0	N/A	0.0	N/A	0.0	N/A
Mathematics	10	55	61.9	0.0	17.1	7.0	22.1
Music	1	0	86.5	0.0	21.4	0.0	30.7
Psychology	2	100	N/A	0.0	N/A	20.0	N/A
Physics	5	100	68.6	40.0	14.4	40.0	22.7
Theatre studies	1	100	N/A	0.0	N/A	40.0	N/A

### **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
Accounting	9	66.7	N/A	0.0	N/A	40.0	N/A
Art	2	100	98.6	50.0	50.2	90.0	87.5
Business studies	28	100	98.7	35.7	36.8	83.6	80.1
Biology	16	100	96.4	56.3	39.2	87.5	78.6
Chemistry	4	100	97.6	50.0	49.0	80.0	84.9
Computing	13	76.9	N/A	30.8	N/A	60.0	N/A
Design and technology	6	100	97.8	0.0	35.0	70.0	77.9
Drama	2	100	99.5	0.0	40.1	70.0	83.6
English literature	12	100	99.5	41.7	46.5	83.3	86.5
Geography	15	100	98.7	46.7	44.5	86.7	84.1
History	15	100	98.9	6.7	44.6	70.7	84.5
Mathematics	17	100	96.6	58.8	55.6	82.3	88.8
Music technology	4	100	N/A	25.0	N/A	85.0	N/A
Physical education	7	100	98.0	71.4	30.9	91.4	75.2
Physics	20	100	96.7	40.0	44.6	80.0	81.7

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English literature was the focus of the inspection.

### English literature

Provision in English literature is **good**.

### Main strength and weaknesses

- Good curriculum leadership has established an effective team that is working together to raise standards.
- Good teaching ensures that students learn well. Given the relatively 'open access' to the course, students' achievement is good in relation to prior attainment.
- Teachers foster good relationships so that the few girls on the course are included in the working partnership and achieve as well as boys.
- More could still be done to ensure that more reticent or less-confident students take more responsibility for their share in the work of the group in lessons.

### Commentary

133. A-level examination results in 2002 were below average. They improved in 2003 and matched the national average in the subject. Analysis shows that students achieved at least as well as could be expected. At AS level in 2003, attainment measured by average points score was below.
134. Standards of work seen in Year 13 during the inspection were above average. Students join the course with quite a wide range of attainment because the department is keen to offer the opportunity of A-level study to students who show enthusiasm for English literature. Given that situation, students have achieved well to reach their current level. They do so because of the effective provision in terms of background material and guidance on tackling assignments. Most students have good attitudes to their work and recognise that they benefit from their teachers' expertise in the subject. Some students are reticent in question and answer or discussion sessions in the classroom. Teachers work hard to overcome this but could nevertheless expect them to take more responsibility for their share in the work of the group. In the one Year 12 lesson seen, students were achieving well overall and standards are above average at this stage of their AS course.
135. Teaching and learning are consistently good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge. They convey this with commitment and use an interesting variety of methods and helpful support materials. Question and answer sessions are effective in establishing understanding; sometimes, as in a Year 12 lesson on Tennessee Williams' 'A Streetcar named Desire', such sessions lead to wide-ranging and productive discussion when students debate the relative merits of an interpretation. As a result, students attend closely and learn well, and have good opportunities to develop their speaking, note-taking and annotation skills. There is a sense of 'working together' in most lessons arising from the good relationships that teachers have established with their students and that exist between students themselves. As a result, the small number of girls on the course are very much part of the working relationship and both boys and girls achieve equally well.
136. Curriculum leadership is good, with clear direction for development. The introduction of a media studies course led by a member of the department has broadened the curriculum opportunities available to students. After a period of declining results up to 2002, the relatively recently appointed head of department has worked hard and successfully to raise standards. He is a good role model for the teaching team. Improvement since the last inspection has been

good because the positive features of that report have been maintained and results are improving.

### **French- sampled**

137. Provision in AS French is satisfactory. French is taught on a consortium arrangement with two other schools and the arrangement is working effectively. One Year 12 lesson was observed and a scrutiny of students' work undertaken. Whilst some students attain above average standards, overall attainment is below the average for all schools. It is satisfactory in relation to students' prior attainment and wide range of prior experience.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Mathematics was the focus of the inspection.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers make good use of oral questioning to maintain involvement and develop ideas.
- A very good course provision provides for students' needs.
- Attitudes to work are good.
- Results need to improve from the 2003 level.
- Action planning needs further development.

### **Commentary**

138. Mathematics is a popular subject at A-level, with numbers opting for the subject well above national norms. There has been an increase in take up in recent years, which is partly due to the wide range of courses on offer. The very good range of options includes opportunity to study courses leading to A-level statistics and further mathematics, as well as two different selections of modules leading to A-level mathematics.

139. In 2003, A-level results were in line with national averages. These results were lower than those in 2002, when students' attainment was above average compared with national figures. Standards observed during the inspection were also above average, and suggest that results can recover from the 2003 level. Standards are exemplified by the fact that less able students can master mathematical topics one at a time, but more able students are able to make connections between different areas of mathematics, and use ideas from other parts of the course in their solution of problems.

140. Given their results at GCSE, several students underachieved in their examinations in 2003. As a result of better advice at the end of Year 11 and broader course provision, more students are now following more appropriate courses of A-level study. Lessons observed indicate that students now progress well in their classes, and that the small number of girls on the course progress at the same rate as the boys.

141. Teaching and learning are good, and there is a positive relationship between teachers and students. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject, and this, together with skilful use of questioning, motivates students to work conscientiously. Students' attitudes to work are good. They work well collaboratively; they support each other and respect contributions from other members of the class. Where teaching is most effective, there is an opportunity for students to investigate mathematical ideas through practical activities, and, as a result, learning is more effective. Students have the key skills they need in order to learn effectively. In

particular, they have good oral skills, which help them to discuss the work and modify their ideas.

142. Assessment is good, with teachers making use of a range of assessment strategies. In class, students benefit from verbal feedback. Written work is marked regularly, and clear advice on how to improve is given. Students are aware of their target grades, and the progress that they make towards them.
143. The broad course provision and the readiness to change in response to student need illustrate good leadership and management. Teachers provide good support outside lessons. The provision of a databank of past examination questions on the school computer network helps students to consolidate their learning, and helps them to become more independent learners. Action planning and sharing good practice in the department need further development. This includes a need to improve the monitoring and evaluation of teaching. Since the last inspection, the quality of teaching has improved, and there are now adequate facilities for pupils to use ICT in lessons, so improvement has been good, although results have not yet attained a consistently high level.

## SCIENCE

### Biology

Provision in biology is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching is of a high quality.
- The students demonstrate a mature and responsible approach to their learning.
- ICT resources to support teaching and learning in the subject are inadequate.

#### Commentary

144. Results at A-level were well above the national average for students getting the highest grades and above average for the full range of grades. These results represent an improvement on 2002 and good value added building on sound results at AS-level. The results at AS in 2003 were below the level achieved in 2002.
145. Work seen during the inspection indicates that standards are being maintained as increasing numbers of students take up the subject. Practical work is of a high standard. Students have good investigative skills and demonstrate that they can enquire in depth. They have a sound knowledge of key concepts and are very articulate in discussion. They respond to the probing questioning of their teachers thoughtfully and intelligently.
146. Currently about 50 per cent of students in Year 12 continue their biology in Year 13, and they take a high degree of responsibility for their own learning. They keep full and accurate records of their work and are encouraged to create these in a way which suits their way of learning. A wider range of note making methods and techniques would be beneficial in summarising topics, showing the structure of particular content and helping them understand more complex relationships between topics.
147. Overall, the teaching is very good. Relationships are very good and help create a stimulating and supportive learning environment. Lessons are well planned and structured. In the lessons observed, a central approach used was to challenge the students to think. The questioning techniques used need expansion and development to include paired and small group work. More use of visual material to support the teaching with powerful, real-life images would also

be beneficial. Currently limited use is made of ICT due to insufficient resources. The practical work is well organised and very well supported by the teachers, and the service provided by the technician team is very good. Students' work is marked in a way which makes clear to students how they can improve. The results of assessment are used to set realistic targets with the students. Extra curricular activities, such as attending a special lecture series at Bristol University, help students see the relevance of their studies and encourage them to consider continuing them further.

148. The small teaching team work well together and very good management ensures a consistently high quality of provision for the students. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

## Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students generally achieve higher examination grades in Years 12 and 13 than predicted from their prior attainment at GCSE.
- Teachers' knowledge and understanding of the subject and its applications are good.
- Teaching ensures that students use what they already know, so that learning is secure.
- Assessment of students' work is insufficiently diagnostic and does not provide guidance on how to improve.
- Opportunities to use ICT in teaching and learning are not always fully exploited.

### Commentary

149. Four students took A-level chemistry in 2003, when two students gained grades A or B and two gained grades D or E. In the previous year, two students took A-level chemistry. With such small numbers, it is not appropriate to analyse the results statistically or compare them with national averages. The current group of A-level chemists has six students.
150. Students enter the AS chemistry course with GCSE grades in science that are below average for students starting such a course in selective schools. Their standards in Year 12 and Year 13 are better overall than might be expected in relation to their GCSE grades and they achieve well. However, a small number of students beginning the AS course with low GCSE grades do not have enough background understanding to take advantage of the good teaching they receive.
151. Students in both Year 12 and Year 13 generally have better knowledge and understanding of current topics than expected. In a Year 12 group, for example, most students were successful in various calculations using the mole concept. In Year 13, students can explain abstract concepts such as pi-bonding in benzene derivatives. In both year groups, most students have well ordered files containing detailed notes of good quality. Teachers ensure that material is cross-referenced between topics so that existing knowledge and understanding can be used quickly and successfully in new contexts. Students have good practical and investigative skills.
152. Each group of students is taught by each of the two teachers of A-level chemistry. Teachers' styles vary but they share an enthusiasm for the subject and the quality of teaching is consistently good. Students enjoy lessons and appreciate having ready access to an alternative explanation of difficult ideas if the first one does not precisely meet their needs, benefiting from their teachers' good subject knowledge and understanding of the applications of chemistry. The increasing popularity of chemistry reflects the positive attitudes to the subject shown by both teachers and students.



153. Students have to think hard from the very beginning of a lesson and teachers make sure that students are active learners, with regular testing to ensure that their understanding is secure. Teachers set a variety of homework exercises to reinforce and extend students' learning. They mark tests and scrutinise homework regularly but marking does not give students precise information about how the work could be improved. Students do not make as much use as they could of ICT in chemistry lessons or through independent study.
154. The head of chemistry provides good leadership for the Salters chemistry course. The two teachers work well together as a team and share a commitment to raising standards. The department is generally able to identify weaknesses and take action to overcome them, a feature that derives from opportunities for mutual lesson observation and regular meetings.
155. The previous inspection report only reported science at A-level in general terms. Meaningful comparisons with earlier years cannot be made due to the small number of students involved. Therefore, it is not possible to judge the progress since the previous inspection.

#### *Areas for development*

- *Improve the diagnostic marking of students' work*
- *Increase the use of ICT to support the subject learning*

## **Physics**

Provision in physics is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is consistently good.
- Students receive good guidance and preparation for coursework assignments.
- Technicians provide good support for the physics department.
- Insufficient use is made of assessment data to set targets and monitor the progress of students.
- The accommodation is inadequate.
- Students underperform in the synoptic module of the A-level examination.

### **Commentary**

156. The results in the AS and A-level examinations over recent years have been broadly in line with the national average. Standards of work seen during the inspection, in lessons and from the scrutiny of students' written work were also generally in line with national expectations. The quality of students' coursework assignments at AS and A-level were particularly good and well above the national average. However, in Year 13 students generally underperform in the synoptic examination paper.
157. The department has a generous admission policy for entry onto the AS physics course, often accepting students with only grade C in science at GCSE who have been refused admission by other schools or colleges. Most students make satisfactory progress in both the AS and A-level years. Results at AS and A-level are broadly in line with the national average - better than average in terms of the percentage of students who gain at least a grade E but below national expectations in the percentage of students gaining at least a grade B.
158. Teaching is consistently good and sometimes very good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are enthusiastic. Lessons are well planned and teachers offer their students clear explanations. A very good AS lesson was observed with students being introduced to the difficult concept of projectiles. A high level of student interest was maintained by the inclusion of a good mix of direct instruction, problem solving and a very good teacher demonstration using a computer simulation of projectile motion. The relationship between the teacher and the

students was noticeably good. Students are given very good guidance in how to tackle the coursework assignments and, as a consequence, students gain high marks in these units of assessment. Preparation for the synoptic paper is inadequate, however, and more time needs to be spent reviewing past papers and highlighting the common underlying principles of different physics topics. The school's system of giving Year 13 students 'study leave' from mid-May reduces opportunities for teachers to provide sufficient final preparation for the synoptic examination which takes place at the end of June.

159. Leadership and management of the physics department are satisfactory. Staff work closely as a team sharing their expertise and ideas and they clearly know their students well. Schemes of work are in place but there is no development plan for the department. Insufficient use is made of assessment data to monitor students' progress and more detailed analysis is needed of students' performance at AS and A-level. The department receives good support from an experienced team of technicians but some physics lessons are taught in classrooms which makes demonstrations and practical work very difficult.
160. Since the last inspection there has been a significant improvement in the level of ICT resources in the department.

#### *Areas for development*

- *Devise strategies to raise student performance in the synoptic physics examination*

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Computer studies was the focus of the inspection. Two lessons were sampled in ICT, one in Year 12 and one in Year 13. Teaching and learning were good in both years and students were achieving well. Standards seen were higher in Year 13.

### **Computing**

Provision in computing is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teaching ensures good learning and promotes very good relationships in lessons.
- Effective monitoring of progress together with good use of assessments help to raise the attainment of individual students.
- Lesson planning and approaches do not always take sufficient account of the needs of different students leading to a lack of focus by a minority.

### **Commentary**

161. In 2003, results at A-level computing were above average.
162. At A-level, standards of work are above average in Year 13. Achievement is good in relation to students' prior attainment. Almost all of the students continued the course from Year 12. The work of higher attaining students shows well-researched projects written in depth and detail. Coursework is planned to a good standard with students demonstrating a logical, coherent sequence of developments building to their final fully analysed and evaluated design. The majority of students base their projects on real-life businesses, charities or clubs and this enables them to gain good evaluation and feedback for analysis as they develop their design ideas. Analysis of their design ideas for their projects involves good use of a range of validation checks to ensure that researched data is correct. All students use technical vocabulary well both orally and in their written work to explain the processes and procedures they are undertaking, using a range of software applications. Lower attaining students understand and

complete coursework requirements, but some of their thinking and explanations are descriptive rather than analytical and lack depth. There were no students with special educational needs in the classes observed. All students show satisfactory understanding of the main elements of research. The majority of students make good headway in communicating information efficiently, using appropriate technical language. The progress of a very small proportion is restricted by insufficient focus on tasks in lessons.

163. Teaching and learning are good. The teachers communicate their good subject knowledge clearly and efficiently. Teachers assess work frequently to check individual progress and give good guidance for improvement. Students learn well by following advice. Whilst teachers generally use effective teaching methods, they do not always take sufficient account in their planning of the range of attainment in classes. Relationships between students and with staff are very good and students respect the views of others. A very small number of students in Year 12, however, are reluctant to contribute to discussion. Higher attaining students show considerable tenacity in pursuing their coursework projects in depth and detail.
164. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear vision for developing the subject and sensitivity to issues relating to the management of change. Good relationships and mutual respect between staff support students' work to improve standards. A-level computing has been introduced since the previous inspection and sufficient resources and accommodation provided to support this. As a result, improvement since the last inspection is good.

#### *Areas for development*

- *Review entry qualifications for ICT courses at A-level to ensure that students have every chance of achieving the best results possible*
- *Devise strategies to encourage students in planning and taking ownership of their work so that target completion dates are met*

## **HUMANITIES**

No subjects were the focus of the inspection. One lesson of history and one lesson of geography were sampled. In both lessons, skilful teaching enabled the students to work effectively. In the geography lesson, very well informed work by the teacher led to very good learning by the students.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

### **Design and technology**

Provision in design and technology is **satisfactory**.

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

- Extra-curricular opportunities and links with industry are very good.
- The ethos for learning is good as are the relationships between teachers and students.
- All students receive high levels of individual support.

#### **Commentary**

165. Attainment at A-level has been inconsistent, ranging from below to above average over the last four years. The number of students entering advanced courses has been similar, but dipped slightly in 2002-2003 from seven to five pupils. In the 2003 AS level examination, three of the seven pupils gained B grade passes and four have continued into A-level. Attainment in 2003 was average and, although results were similar to predictions, they were disappointing overall.

166. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 12 and 13. Standards overall in current Year 12 and Year 13 classes are in line with expectations for this stage of their courses and in Year 12 reflect satisfactory progress from GCSE to advanced level. There is evidence that students analyse problems to innovate and create when designing, but not all of them display a sound understanding of construction and materials technology. Their ICT skills are limited and further provision with reference to computer-aided design and manufacture is needed.
167. Teaching and learning was good in both of the lessons observed, one of which included an industrial visit. Links with industry are very good, encouraging students to become engaged in aspects of related technologies and industrial practice.
168. Relationships between teachers and students are very good and students receive high levels of individual tuition. There is a need for all teachers involved in the delivery of the courses to meet more formally with reference to short and medium-term planning and agree in detail the levels of guidance provided for each student. This would help to address the apparent lack of urgency by some students in completing coursework and ultimately meeting deadlines.
169. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Since the previous inspection there has been a significant change in staffing and early signs indicate the department is well placed for further improvement.

#### *Areas for development*

- *Ensure the collaboration between all teachers involved in the delivery of the course*
- *Plan for increased resourcing to support computer-aided design and manufacturing*

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

Art and design was the focus of the inspection. Lessons were sampled in music and theatre studies. In the A-level music lesson, the quality of teaching and learning was good. The lesson made effective use of instrumental resources and was well planned. Students were working to a good standard. In the AS-level theatre studies lesson, the teacher guided discussions and enabled the students to make good progress in understanding the appeal of narrative in films.

### **Art and design**

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

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

- Very good teaching results in very good learning.
- Results in the 2003 AS-level examination were above average.
- Students demonstrate excellent attitudes to art.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory for sixth form work.

#### **Commentary**

170. In the 2003 A-level examination, the results of the two students were average. Standards of Year 13 work seen during inspection were well above average, representing very good achievement for the five students on the course. Students produce imaginative, large-scale work in a range of media with considerable confidence and technical skill. They have a deep understanding of contemporary artists and assimilate their ideas well in their own work. Students are highly articulate, discuss their work with considerable enthusiasm and intelligence and are particularly proficient at relating technique to meaning. The quality of finished pieces is often outstanding and built on careful visual and textual research, particularly

in students' studies of the human form. Standards of work seen in Year 12 show similar levels of skill and commitment. Girls and boys achieve equally well.

171. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Students develop very well as independent learners because teachers have very high expectations of them and set individually demanding targets, based on incisive and regular assessment and evaluation. Teaching is highly enthusiastic and engaging, which promotes high levels of creative involvement. Teachers possess very good subject knowledge; this is reflected in the use of resources, the quality of questioning and understanding of the examination requirements that enables students to reach the highest levels. Students' understanding of art is particularly enhanced by the teacher's ability to explain how art reflects life, drawing on examples from students' personal experiences.
172. The quality of leadership and management is good. The new subject leader has a strong vision for the department and her work has already had a dramatic impact on the standards and quality of work produced by students. Development planning appropriately identifies current needs.
173. Accommodation is unsatisfactory for the range, size and scale of work required at A-level and storage facilities are poor. The curriculum is well planned in accordance with the exam board requirements. Students benefit from a good range of visual and textual resources. The range of visits to national art collections enriches the students' experience of art. The department has made very good improvement since the previous inspection, especially in the quality of teaching.

*Areas for development:*

- *Extend the range of ICT resources available for A-level art*
- *Plan for a dedicated sixth form art room*

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

No subjects in this area were seen during the inspection.

## **BUSINESS**

Business studies was the focus of the inspection. One lesson of accountancy was seen. In this well thought out and facilitated lesson, students were suitably challenged and they worked well together to develop and share ideas.

### **Business studies**

Provision in business studies is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teaching assists students' good acquisition of knowledge and skills.
- Very good assessment, effectively used, improves students' work, raising standards.
- Students' very good attitudes and rapport with teachers help them to achieve well.
- Lower attaining students' analytical and language skills need improvement to reach the higher grades.
- ICT is insufficiently integrated within teaching.

## Commentary

174. A-level business studies results in 2003 were above average. At AS-level the results were also well above average. Standards of work seen for current Year 13 students are above average and represent good achievement for these students in relation to their starting points. Year 12 students are making sound progress. Students' strengths are their good business knowledge and analytical skills, and their assured use of language and number. Relative weaknesses are the lower attaining students' careless spelling and punctuation and overly descriptive writing, failing, for example, to analyse effectively an organisation's response to competition or financial constraints.
175. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers generally plan lessons well and teach at a brisk pace with suitable challenge, so that time available is used productively and students are fully stretched. They constantly probe students' good previous learning with effective and well-targeted questioning, and set relevant examination-type essays. Students work together effectively on appropriate case studies and oral presentations, including, for example, a formal debate on arms sales to Indonesia, all of which contribute well to the students' social, moral and cultural development and allow them to communicate, share ideas and solve problems.
176. High quality, accurate assessment, accompanied by detailed and constructive oral and written feedback, gives students – nearly all keen, mature learners – very good insight into their progress and helps them to improve their work. In addition, teachers' very good, up-to-date subject knowledge enables them to illustrate and enliven their teaching with continual references to real businesses. Homework is used well to build on classwork, frequently containing a research element which develops students' independent learning. Students have access to computers outside lessons, and nearly all have computers at home. However, ICT is not used in lessons and opportunities are lost to extend students' business and ICT skills. Higher attaining students are effectively stretched and middle attaining students are well catered for, but more differentiated tasks in lessons would better support and motivate lower attainers. Students with special educational needs make good progress and are well supported. Students for whom English is a second language, who form a significant proportion of the Year 12 group, achieve well and reach the same standards as others.
177. The department is well led and managed. Assessment is used very effectively to set targets and monitor closely students' progress. Yet more business trips and invited speakers would enhance all students' learning experience; but a real strength lies in the 'buzz' and true entrepreneurial spirit generated by the Year 12 and Year 13 students' enthusiastic involvement in two separate, successful Young Enterprise projects.
178. Good recruitment, good retention, raised standards and good teaching make improvement since the last inspection good.

### *Areas for development*

- *Use more ICT*
- *Plan lessons to meet the range and pace of learning needs*

## HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

No subjects in this area were seen during the inspection.

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

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

