

## **INSPECTION REPORT**

### **GOFFS SCHOOL**

Cheshunt

LEA Area: Hertfordshire

Unique Reference Number: 117587

Head teacher: Dr J Versey

Lead Inspector: Grace Marriott

Dates of Inspection: 2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> February 2004

Inspection Number: 259285

Inspection Carried Out Under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## Information about the school

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of students:	11 - 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1273
School address:	Goffs Lane Cheshunt Waltham cross Hertfordshire
Postcode:	EN7 5QW
Telephone number:	01992 424200
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Christina Knight
Date of previous inspection:	October 1997

## Characteristics of the school

Goffs School is a large, specialist language college in Cheshunt, Hertfordshire. The school has a sixth form of around 230 students. It has increased in size by 200 students since the last inspection. Most students are from white UK backgrounds with some who are of Italian or Greek origin. Very few students are at an early stage of learning English. Many students come from reasonably affluent homes, however the proportion entitled to free school meals is increasing. The proportion of students with special educational needs is lower than average. The main areas of need are emotional, behavioural and moderate learning difficulties, with a few students who have dyslexia or are on the autistic spectrum or have a physical disability. The school has achieved a number of awards including the Artsmark Silver, Sportsmark Gold, Charter Mark, Investors in People, the Healthy Schools Award and a school achievement award. Year groups have varied considerably from year to year in their knowledge, skills and understanding when they joined the school. The current Year 7 was above average, whereas Year 11 was average.

## Information about the inspection team

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
3673	Grace Marriott	Lead inspector	
9569	Jan Leaning	Lay inspector	
33324	Joanna Fulwood	Team inspector	English 11-16 and 6 <sup>th</sup> form
25778	Andrew Hicks	Team inspector	Mathematics 11-16 and 6 <sup>th</sup> form
24458	Gordon Jackson	Team inspector	Science 11-16
30433	Chris Corp	Team inspector	Chemistry – 6 <sup>th</sup> form
31238	Gordon Clubb	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
2501	Raye Allison-Smith	Team inspector	Art 11-16 and 6 <sup>th</sup> form
32590	Roger Fenwick	Team inspector	Design and technology
18663	Phil Burchall	Team inspector	Geography 11-16 and 6 <sup>th</sup> form
1508	Graham Jackson	Team inspector	History
15075	Bryan Stephens	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages, 6 <sup>th</sup> form French and Spanish English as an additional language
30814	Elizabeth Coley	Team inspector	Music, Critical thinking, Citizenship
27226	Richard Cribb	Team inspector	Physical education, religious education
14490	Susan Jackson	Team inspector	History (international baccalaureate) 6 <sup>th</sup> form Vocational courses
33235	Pauline Pitman	Team inspector	Special educational needs
32331	Peter Barnes	Team inspector	Media studies – 6 <sup>th</sup> form
30563	Jackie Pentlow	Team inspector	

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is an effective school because students are well taught**, have access to a wide range of opportunities and leave with good qualifications for their future education or careers. Staff and governors are working hard to ensure that the school recruits and retains good teachers and to improve students' attitudes. Students and parents are somewhat mixed in their views, but most are supportive and almost all believe that the school expects its students to work hard. The school provides sound value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- Students achieve well in art, music, history, information and communication technology (ICT), physical education and drama and in media studies, French and Spanish in the 6<sup>th</sup> form
- GCSE, Advanced Level and International Baccalaureate (IB) results are above average
- Teaching and learning are good overall, and very good in the 6<sup>th</sup> form
- Students do not always take enough responsibility for their own learning and behaviour
- Staffing difficulties have had an impact on standards, leading to some under-achievement in Years 7 to 9
- Teachers are not always consistent enough in implementing school policies and procedures
- The sixth form provision is good and has been strengthened by the International Baccalaureate
- ICT is used well in teaching
- The house structure and the mixed age tutor groups are providing both good pastoral care and good opportunities for personal development and responsibility

Attainment on entry to the school has changed significantly since the last inspection. It was well above average and then declined. In the last three years it has begun to improve and in Year 7 is slightly above average. GCSE results have remained above average, as have A Level results. The IB programme is improving independent learning in the 6<sup>th</sup> form. The strong focus on teaching and learning is resulting in improvements in the quality of work. The school is working hard to improve the school environment and students' attitudes to school, but staff recognise that this needs to be consolidated and built on further. **The improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.**

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

**Students achieve well overall**, though this is better in Years 10 to 13 than in Years 7 to 9. Achievement is good at GCSE, A Level and in the IB. In Years 7 to 9, achievement is satisfactory in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and standards are average. In most other subjects standards are above average and achievement is good. Achievement is better in Years 10 and 11 and in the 6<sup>th</sup> form mainly because the teaching is better in these year groups. In all year groups, achievement is generally good where staffing has been stable and students have been well taught.

**Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are satisfactory and the school works hard to promote good attitudes.** Most students behave well in lessons and are positive, particularly when well taught. Around the school, and where teaching is less effective, a significant minority of students are more negative and do not behave as well as others. Overall, attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory.

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

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

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

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION

### The school is providing a good education.

**Teaching is good.** It is very good in the sixth form, good in Years 10 and 11 and sound in Years 7 to 9. Teachers are knowledgeable and enthusiastic, which helps to develop students' interest in their work. Most teachers manage and motivate students well so that they make good progress. The teaching of history, art and media studies is particularly good, but there was some very good teaching in almost all subjects and year groups. In a few lessons where the teaching and learning were less than satisfactory this was mainly because students did not have enough time to practise and consolidate what they knew or the teacher had not anticipated where they might have difficulties or because they did not deal effectively enough with some poor attitudes. Most teachers use assessment, marking and homework constructively, but this is not consistent enough across the school. The curriculum is good and provides a wide range of opportunities both in the main school and sixth form. The developments in work-related learning are good. The school takes good care of students' welfare, health and safety and involves them in its work and development. It also provides good guidance and support for its students, though in places lacks consistency.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

**The school's leadership is good.** The head teacher provides innovative and determined leadership and the leadership team is strong and effective. Together with other managers they show a clear commitment to raising standards in the school. Governors are effective in their work. They are well informed and both challenge and support improvement and the achievement of high standards. **The management is satisfactory overall.** The school operates efficiently on a day to day level, but some good systems are new and not yet having as much impact as the school would like. Staffing difficulties have also had an impact.

## PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The partnership with parents is good and they are generally positive about the school, though some (a minority) are not convinced that the school is concerned enough about the impact of staffing changes. Similarly, students are mostly positive.

## IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are

- Raise achievement in Years 7 to 9
- Consolidate the work being done on improving attitudes to school, through more consistent implementation of policies and procedures and more work with students to improve their willingness to take responsibility for their behaviour, learning and attitudes
- Ensure that all systems, policies and schemes of work provide the quality of support and guidance for new and inexperienced staff that the best ones do

### Sixth form

- Encourage students to take better advantage of the educational opportunities available
- Improve the way in which students use the time allocated for individual study
- and to meet statutory requirements:
- Provide a daily act of collective worship for all students

- Provide religious education in the sixth form

## THE SIXTH FORM AT GOFFS SCHOOL

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The sixth form is both effective and cost effective.** Students attained results that were above the national average in 2003 and their overall achievement was good in relation to their average standards on entry. It provides a positive environment for the personal and social development of students. Teaching in the sixth form is very good and students are offered good levels of support. The school offers a wide range of subjects and courses at A Level and in the International Baccalaureate (IB)

The main strengths and weaknesses are

- Very good teaching is characterised by high levels of expertise and commitment
- The school offers a very broad range of courses, including the international baccalaureate
- The quality of provision for the IB is very good
- Students value the very good opportunities to assume responsibility in the school and to mentor younger students
- Some students demonstrate reluctance to broaden their intellectual horizons and to take advantage of the educational opportunities available
- Students do not always use the time allocated for individual study well

### 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
<b>English, languages and communication</b>	<b>English: satisfactory:</b> teaching is variable with some elements of excellence. There is evidence of a profound level of philosophical and reflective debate as well as fairly pedestrian discussion, which could account for the lack of higher grades at A level. <b>French: excellent.</b> The teaching and learning are excellent and result in students making excellent progress. Standards of listening, speaking and reading are above average. Written work is average. Relationships are excellent. <b>Spanish: very good.</b> The teaching and learning are very good and result in very good achievement. Standards of listening, speaking and reading are above average, but students' written work is less well developed. Relationships are excellent.
<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>Good:</b> teaching in Year 13 is very good, and as a result students do well at A level. Teaching is good in Year 12 leading to good progress and achievement at AS level and in IB courses.
<b>Science</b>	<b>Chemistry: satisfactory.</b> In 2002, results were well below the national average at both A and AS level. Standards are now close to the national level. Specialist teachers have very good subject knowledge and teaching and learning are good. Teachers and students share good relationships. Work in Physics and Biology was sampled. In both subjects standards are good and students are achieving well.
<b>Information and communication technology (AVCE)</b>	<b>Good.</b> Students are producing work of a good standard and are applying it to real-life situations.
<b>Business studies</b>	Work in IB economics and in A level business studies was sampled. In both subjects standards are above average and the teaching is good
<b>Engineering</b>	Work in design and technology was sampled. The standards in resistant materials were below average, in textiles the practical work was good, and better than the theory.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
<b>Humanities</b>	<p><b>Geography: Satisfactory</b> The subject is well taught, most students learn well and are enthusiastic. Standards are above average for overall passes, though students do not always achieve as well as they do in other subjects especially at AS level.</p> <p><b>History IB: very good.</b> Teaching is very good which leads to very good learning and above average attainment.</p> <p>In the sampled subjects, progress was very good in A Level history and politics. The teaching was good overall and excellent in history.</p>
<b>Visual and performing arts and media</b>	<p><b>Media studies: very good.</b> Teachers' very good subject knowledge enables students to achieve well. A wide variety of resources enhance student learning. Students are involved and committed to the subject.</p> <p><b>Art and design: very good.</b> Teaching and learning are very good. Students are highly motivated and committed to their work. This leads to very good achievement. Leadership and management are very good.</p>
<b>General education</b>	<p><b>Critical thinking: good.</b> The teaching and learning are very good, and result in good achievement. Most students are positive about the enjoyment and interest they gain from lessons, but a significant minority has a negative attitude that is a barrier to high achievement.</p>

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

### Advice, guidance and support

Students receive good quality of support and guidance. Information about sixth form courses is good. The quality of advice offered in preparation for university entry is good, and students are very well informed about careers opportunities. Reporting and review procedures are satisfactory.

### Leadership and management

The leadership of the sixth form is good and shows a clear view of areas that are in need of improvement. Day-to-day management is effective.

### Students' views of the sixth form

Discussions between inspectors and a significant number of sixth form students indicate that students are justifiably positive about the quality of teaching in the sixth form and the level of all-round support they receive. Concerns expressed in the questionnaire completed in the previous term about the running of the school were not borne out in discussion. However, students felt that the school could be more responsive to their views.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards at GCSE, at A Level and in the International Baccalaureate are **above average** and students are achieving well. In Years 7 to 9, achievement is **satisfactory** in the core subjects and standards are average. In most other subjects standards are above average and achievement is good. In all year groups achievement is generally **good** where staffing has been stable and students have been well taught.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in 2003 were above average and better than similar schools
- Standards and achievement in history are very good throughout the school
- In Years 7 to 9 achievement is good in modern languages, music, geography and ICT and better than in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science
- In Years 10 and 11 achievement is good in design and technology, geography, ICT, French, PE, and citizenship
- Achievement in some subjects has been hampered by staffing difficulties
- Achievement is better in Years 10 and 11 and in the 6<sup>th</sup> form mainly because the teaching is better in these year groups

#### Commentary

##### Standards achieved in subjects and courses

1. The results of the Year 9 tests in 2003 were average when compared with all schools nationally, though well below average when compared with those of schools with a similar point score based on Year 6 tests. Some students, mainly boys, undoubtedly under-achieved. Achievement in the current Year 9 classes is now satisfactory and standards are improving in English, mathematics and science, though still average. In history, standards are well above average and achievement is very good. Students are reaching above average standards in art, geography, music and their achievement is good. In ICT, French, Spanish and physical education, students are also achieving well. In these subjects students start from a lower baseline and achieve an average standard at the end of Year 9.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.0 (36.1)	33.4 (33,3 )
mathematics	36.2(34.3)	35.4 (34.7 )
science	33.8 (33.0)	33.6 (33.3 )

*There were 220 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for 2002.*

2. In 2003 the students, who started the school with average attainment, achieved well. Their GCSE results were above average, overall and also better than schools which achieved similar results in the Year 9 tests. Results in art, science, English, home economics and mathematics were all significantly better than the national results, but German results were not as good.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	60(64)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	92 (93)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A *-G grades	99 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	38.2(34.7)	34.7 (34.7)

*There were 222 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for 2002.*

3. In the current Year 11, students have made very good progress in art, music and history because they are being very well taught. In these subjects standards are well above average. In design and technology, geography, ICT, French, PE, and citizenship, the teaching is good and students are achieving well. Standards in these subjects are above average. In English the effective work being done in the department to raise standards has not had time to have an impact on results. In science, though standards are average and achievement is satisfactory, the attitudes to work of some older boys are resulting in under-achievement. Across Years 7 to 11 staffing difficulties have affected standards in mathematics, science and design and technology.

4. Students with special educational needs make satisfactory progress, overall. It is good when they are working within the learning support area. However, in some mainstream lessons the work is not always matched well enough to students' needs and as a result they make slower progress. For example, in some Year 7 mathematics groups the work was too difficult for lower-attainers. The school currently has very few students at an early stage of learning English and they achieve at a similar level to other students. Gifted and talented students generally achieve well.

**Sixth form**

5. In recent years, A Level results have fluctuated between above and well above average. Results in 2003 were above the national average with fifteen subjects achieving a 100% pass rate. In history, mathematics and PE over half the students achieved A or B grades. The International Baccalaureate is a relatively new course. In 2002, the results were above average and in 2003 they were average.

6. Current standards in the sixth form are above average, overall. Standards in both A Level and the International Baccalaureate history courses are well above average and students' achievement is very good. This is mainly the result of excellent teaching. Standards in mathematics, ICT art, history and media studies are above average and students are achieving well. In other subjects, standards are broadly average and achievement is satisfactory. The critical thinking course is new and as yet students have not taken any examinations so direct comparisons with national results are not possible. The standards seen in lessons represented good achievement. In modern languages, achievement in German is not as good as in French or Spanish. In mathematics and chemistry achievement is satisfactory, but has been affected by staffing difficulties.

### **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	87.5(90.9)	91.5 (90,3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	20.3(22.8)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per pupil	280.5(298.1)	253.1 (254.5)

*There were 92 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for 2002.*

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

Most students behave **well** and have reasonably positive attitudes. However, where teaching is less effective and around the school a significant number of students have negative attitudes and do not behave as well as the others. Overall, attitudes and behaviour are **satisfactory**. The overall provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is **good**, though in spiritual it is satisfactory. Attendance is satisfactory, most students come to school regularly and on time and the school works hard to encourage regular attendance. There have been 110 fixed period exclusions: three of these have been made permanent.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Most students behave well, are expected to work hard and are reasonably positive
- Attitudes and learning are affected by low-level disruption in classes where teaching is less stimulating and students do not behave well
- The mixed age tutor groups, the house system and the school council are successfully giving students a 'voice' and extending opportunities for social interaction
- Good social, moral and cultural activities improve attitudes and behaviour, but too little is done to promote spiritual development
- Sixth form students are very positive in lessons and are willing to take responsibility around the school, in house and tutor groups

### **Commentary**

7. Most students' interest and enthusiasm for school leads to good levels of learning and many students treat each other and the adults with respect. Students behave well when teaching is challenging and the expectations are clearly outlined and, when given the chance, work well together. They particularly enjoy practical subjects. Students with special educational needs show similarly sensible attitudes. However, the behaviour and attitudes to work of some younger students and in the lower sets, are just satisfactory as too many instances of silliness and inattention are allowed to disrupt the learning of the majority. This confirmed some of the concerns reflected by parents and students in the surveys and questionnaires. Relationships are satisfactory, adults provide good role models and most, but not all, students respond well.

8. Students think that when bullying takes place it is dealt with appropriately and not allowed to get out of hand. They know of and appreciate the 'bullying committee', which has been set up to combat bullying. The tutor group and house system are providing a good framework for personal development and the opportunities to take responsibility which this provides, help to improve attitudes and relationships across the year groups. Many students carry out their duties sensibly and well, for example in the very effective year and school councils to which all forms elect representatives.

9. Students' moral, social and cultural development is good, they are constantly reminded to think of others, both in the school and in the wider community. The school works hard to raise self-esteem by giving good praise and encouragement. Most students understand and respect the rules and value their time in school, however, their attitude to their environment is casual and they are careless about dropping litter. The school takes part in fund raising for charities, one of these was

'Comic Relief' and students in Year 7 also raised money for sick children through a *Readathon*. The international school and language college status adds a further dimension. The school also supports the education of a student in Kenya. During the summer, the school enjoyed a visit from a group of Belarussian students. Each year, the International Day raises awareness of different countries and cultures through sports, dancing and creative activities. Students are taught about different cultures and faiths in the world but the emphasis placed on the promotion of racial harmony, though satisfactory, is not as explicit as it could be.

10. A wide range of music from other cultures, such as Indonesia; citizenship lessons; visits, both in this country and abroad and productions, together with the opportunity to take part in jazz and street dance, also provide a good contribution to students' cultural and multi-cultural awareness. Spiritual development is satisfactory, but planning for delivery across the curriculum is inconsistent. In assemblies, at form time and in some lessons, there is time for reflection but the 'thought for the day' is not always fully explored.

11. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are good and most students come to school regularly and on time. A minority do not and these students have a significant effect on attendance levels overall. The educational welfare officer and the school inclusion officer are involved at an early stage and most parents understand the school's expectations.

### Sixth form

12. Overall, students are positive about their opportunities and enjoy being in the sixth form. They are pleased with the advice, guidance and support they receive and say that teachers are accessible to help them with their work. In lessons, attitudes are good and students generally work hard but they are not as independent in their attitudes to learning outside lessons as they could be and do not always make good use of their study time. Opportunities for leadership and for them to support younger students are widespread. They act as prefects and have a lead role on the School Council and with the vertical tutor/ house system where they successfully interact with younger students. Some take part in the 'millennium volunteer scheme' which helps others in the community and a group of Year 12 students made a very powerful contribution to the *Learning to Learn Day* for students in Year 7. A playlet about the importance of being able to read was the introduction to the theme for the morning, which was how to use research skills effectively. Most students attend regularly and on time, but as they work a 'flexible' system it is difficult to assess attendance accurately.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	7.5%	School data:	0.6%
National data:	7.8%	National data:	1.2%

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

**Ethnic background of Students**

Categories used in the annual school census
White - British
White – Irish
White – any other white background
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – White and Asian
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Black or Black British - Caribbean
Black or Black British – African
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

**Exclusions in the last school year**

No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
1129	83 (boys) 15 (girls)	2 (boys)
3	9 (boys)	1 (boy)
89	1 (girl)	1 (boy)
6	0	0
2	0	0
9	0	0
14	0	0
6	0	0
3	0	0
4	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
3	0	0
3	0	0

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

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The school is providing a **good** education. The teaching is good overall and very good in the sixth form. The curriculum is good and provides a wide range of opportunities both in the main school and sixth form and the developments in work-related learning are good. The school takes good care of students' welfare, health and safety and involves them in its work and development. It also provides good guidance and support for its students, though in places lacks consistency.

**Teaching and learning**

Teaching is **good** overall and **very good** in the sixth form. Well over nine out of every ten lessons were satisfactory or better and over two thirds of the teaching was good. Staffing difficulties have had an impact in some areas, but in most subjects teachers are working hard to overcome these.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Lessons are well structured and have a good variety of activities
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge
- In most lessons, the level of challenge stretches the students but is achievable
- ICT used effectively in most subjects
- Teachers use resources well to focus students' and students' attention and develop their knowledge and understanding
- In a few lessons, teachers had not anticipated where students might have difficulties
- Behaviour is well managed in most lessons though sometimes teachers were not using the school's behaviour management strategies effectively enough to deal with some low level disruption
- Sixth form students are not routinely applying independent learning skills to their work outside lessons

## Commentary

13. The strengths in the teaching are apparent in all year groups and almost all subjects. Teachers are knowledgeable and keen to share their knowledge and enthusiasm with students. In the good and very good lessons, the skilful questioning ensures an appropriate level of challenge for the range of students in the class. The teaching challenges students to develop their answers and give reasons. The teaching of history and art was particularly good, but there was some very good teaching in almost all subjects and all year groups.

14. In most lessons, teachers paid particular attention to developing students' literacy skills through effective use of discussion and the use of technical vocabulary. Key words are displayed, used and explained in several subjects but other good practice exists especially in design technology where writing frames are in use to facilitate writing and there are word banks to raise levels. The *Learning to Learn* days and lessons have had a demonstrable impact on reading and writing skills. Support for numeracy was less evident, but effectively structured in subjects such as physical education, where students are encouraged to use a range of data handling techniques to monitor their progress on fitness programmes.

15. Teachers used a wide variety of methods to keep lessons moving at a brisk pace. Explanation, demonstration, discussion, teamwork and ICT were all used in different ways to motivate students to work hard and to enjoy learning.

16. An example of excellent practice was observed in a Year 7 history class taken by an Advanced Skills Teacher.

## Example of excellent practice

**The lesson objective was to use contemporary opinions of King John to practise the skills of interpretation.**

The teacher introduced the topic briskly by asking students to explain what they thought the word "interpretation" might mean. Photographs of famous people including Nelson Mandela, Princess Diana and Spiderman were projected on the whiteboard and students were asked whether the interpretation shown was good or bad. An interesting discussion showed students' understanding of attributes and some insightful answers around heroism and service to the community. The lesson then focused on King John using excellent school produced materials. Extracts from contemporary sources, mainly from monks, charged John with killing his nephew, attacking the privileges of the barons and the power of the Pope, and losing royal treasure. Students listened to recordings, noting whether each source provide evidence for or against John. The teacher clearly explained terms such as clergy and nobles. Students worked on booklets at three different levels of difficulty and some accepted the challenge of working on a harder booklet. Contextual information reminded students of the importance of the provenance of sources and possible reasons for John's actions. The first answers almost uniformly accepted the hostile view of Roger of Wendover. Some students, particularly the higher-attainers, began to see that there were other perspectives. One identified a power struggle and another gave good reasons for her strong argument that John was not guilty. An excellent plenary weighed responses and generated further discussion. Planning showed how the reasons for differing interpretations will be explored further and how John's alleged actions would need to be seen in the context of medieval kingship, the particular challenges that he faced and the preponderance of contemporary evidence from sources which were likely to be biased.

17. Where teaching was satisfactory rather than good, the pace of work was slower and teachers did not always make their expectations for the quality and quantity of work clear enough and did not check students' understanding thoroughly enough. The level of challenge was not always accurately matched to the needs of both high and lower achievers. In a few unsatisfactory lessons, students did not have enough time to practise and consolidate what they knew or the teacher had not anticipated where they might have difficulties and had not thought about suitable strategies to help them to complete the tasks successfully.

18. Many students are not naturally well motivated or keen and teachers have to work hard to engage their attention and interest. However, most students behave well and teachers are able to deal effectively with any low level disruption or lack of attention. On a few occasions when behaviour was not well managed, learning was less than satisfactory, because teachers did not deal effectively enough with some disruptive boys. They did not use the school's systems effectively.

19. In some departments the potential impact of staffing difficulties has been managed well but in others, not enough thought has been given to ensuring the new teachers have good quality schemes of work and guidance. In a few unsatisfactory lessons, the students were able to take advantage of new or temporary teachers who were not sure about what they should be doing and did not know the classes.

20. Most teachers make constructive use of assessment but this is not consistent across the school. The assessment and marking is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. The good assessment and marking helps students to improve their work and in subjects such as history, art and modern languages it is very good. In other subjects such as English and mathematics the marking is more variable and does not always give students enough guidance on how to improve. Similarly homework though satisfactory, varies in quality and usefulness.

### **Special educational needs**

21. Teaching within the learning support area is well planned. Books are marked consistently and assessments used effectively to inform planning and provision. Students' targets are discussed during review meetings and inserted into the front of students' planners. In other lessons, the support for students with special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Some subject teachers adapt individual education plans to the specific needs of their subject. For example, in history the resources are carefully adapted for different students and teachers spend time with students reviewing their work and discuss areas for development. However, this is by no means the case in all subjects. Similarly, the deployment of support assistants is variable. In English, teachers know their students well and use support staff to enhance provision. However in some groups not enough is done to provide teaching and resources which meet individual needs although text books are generally appropriate.

### **Sixth form**

22. The quality of teaching and learning in the sixth form is very good overall. A very high proportion of the teaching was good and much of it was very good. One lesson in ten was excellent. Teachers know their subjects very well and make very clear the examination requirements in their subject so that students are in no doubt what they have to do. Assessment and marking are generally good and provide students with much useful information about their progress and how to improve. Teachers employ different teaching styles very effectively to meet the needs of students in their classes and the subjects they teach. An excellent A Level history lesson, for instance, was a skilled combination of staged, structured learning leading to increasing levels of critical thinking about whether there was a mid-Tudor socio-political crisis. Students learn well through discussion, especially where classes are small. The tutorial approach in a mathematics lesson was very effective in developing students' understanding of circle co-ordinate geometry because they were fully involved in shaping the lesson as it progressed, helping them to clarify misunderstandings.

23. Teachers place high intellectual and practical demands on students. High quality debate on how language is used to portray character led to high standards and very good achievement in an IB lesson where students explored the nature of power in literature such as Shakespeare's "The Tempest". In ICT, students work at a high intellectual level to produce commercial software for real needs, for example producing web-based training materials for librarians. Good emphasis on experimental methodology in science ensures that students can draw meaningful conclusions from experiments, for instance when exploring the differences between saturated and unsaturated hydrocarbons.

24. An emphasis on independence and personal exploration is a key feature of some teaching, for example in design and technology. Where students respond well to the challenge, they produce high quality work, for instance portfolios of textiles inspired by Latino and flamenco style. However, in a small number of lessons, too much direction hinders the development of individuality and restricts students' achievement.

25. In some subjects, teachers use learning resource materials very effectively. In an IB history lesson, for instance computer presentations and photo-montages were very effective in promoting discussion on why the Vietcong were victorious in the 1970's Vietnam war.

26. Although most lessons are stimulating and well matched to students' needs, very occasionally lack of information about their prior achievements leads to lessons that lack real purpose. It was not clear, for example, what the intention was behind a student-led lesson exploring the influences on 1970's fashion. Consequently neither the student leading the lesson nor others taking notes gained significantly by the experience.

#### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 202 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
14(7%)	58 (29%)	78 (39%)	45 (22%)	6 (2.5 %)	1(0.5 %)	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.*

#### **The curriculum**

Overall, the quality of the curriculum is **good**. The opportunity for enrichment, including out-of-school activities, is very good. The quality and quantity of accommodation and resources are satisfactory.

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

- The curriculum is innovative and tailored to satisfy the needs of individual students and groups of students
- The school offers a broad curriculum with a very good range of extra-curricular activities which are well supported by the students
- There is widespread use of information and communication technology (ICT) throughout the school
- The structure of the school day sometimes impedes teaching and learning
- Difficulties in recruiting and retaining teachers have affected some subject areas
- Although the accommodation is satisfactory overall some of it is good and some very good

#### **Commentary**

27. The school uses innovative methods in an effort to tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of individual and groups of students. Examples of this include the transition project which is circulated to those Year 6 students who have been offered a place at the school. The project involves work from a variety of subject areas and includes some video clips. Students speak with enthusiasm about their involvement with the project. Subject departments incorporate the work carried out on the transition project into their schemes of work. This provision is very good. Another example is the use of curriculum days and weeks with a different focus for each year group. This provision is good.

28. The school offers a curriculum which is broad, and the influence of the language college status is seen in the range of languages offered, though the impact of the specialist status is not as marked in other subjects as very few departments make reference to other languages or internationalism in their planning or schemes of work. Some students from school will be encouraged to take a GCSE in their home language though there is no direct support for this. The wide range of extra-curricular activities includes academic studies, such as a qualification in ICT, in addition to those relating to languages, sport and the arts. The standard of performance in these

activities is sometimes high. Student participation in extra-curricular activities is very good and reflects a high level of commitment from the staff. The international days, overseas visits and a wide range of other visits and visitors all contribute strongly to the education provided.

29. Since the last inspection very good progress has been made in incorporating the use of ICT across the curriculum. All students in Years 10 and 11 now follow a combined citizenship and ICT course which results in a GCSE qualification in both subjects. This initiative is very good. The school has a comprehensive website which is widely used. Most subject areas now incorporate ICT in their lessons. As users of ICT the teachers provide good role models for the students. All teachers are provided with lap top computers and many use these for their planning, record keeping and to aid their lesson delivery. The use of ICT throughout the school is very good.

30. Many of the developments in the school have been brought in during the last two years, and have not yet become fully consolidated. Some of these initiatives, such as the changes to the structure of the school day lunch period, have implications for the delivery of the curriculum. For instance, in design and technology the teachers have difficulty in preparing for practical lessons in the afternoon because of the short lunch break. The school is aware of this and reviewing its impact.

31. Students with special educational needs have good access to the school's flexible curriculum. Those working well below expected national curriculum levels are offered additional literacy and numeracy support within the learning support area rather than pursuing a second modern foreign language. In addition the *Learning to Learn* days emphasise the importance of, and teach, literacy and learning skills across the curriculum. For those Year 10 and 11 students who require additional support in a work-related environment there are opportunities to participate in work-related programmes, additional literacy and numeracy support and the Youth Award Scheme. Teacher expertise within Learning Support is very good. The school took part in a County project to promote dyslexia friendly schools and all departments benefited from training which helped to promote awareness of dyslexia. Teaching assistants are a valuable, well informed team who have the potential to be used even more efficiently to raise achievement in mainstream lessons through monitoring of individual education plans and a more flexible approach to support. Learning support accommodation and resources which includes nine computers, are good. Development of appropriate software, over time, would enhance and modernise strategies for teaching basic literacy and numeracy skills. There is very good internal use made of ICT to improve communication between staff.

32. Staffing is the highest priority and the steps to ensure the school has a full complement of specialist teachers are constantly being reviewed and evaluated. In recent years, the considerable staffing turbulence has had a lasting impact on standards in subjects like design technology, mathematics and science and placed a considerable strain on some middle managers to maintain and develop the curriculum. Staffing shortages have resulted in some students having a reduced curriculum opportunity and subjects being delivered by teachers outside of their specialist area.

33. The quality of the school's accommodation is very mixed. It reflects the various building projects which have accompanied the growth of the school. In some subject areas such as PE and modern languages it is very good and in performing arts and English it is good. The accommodation for mathematics is satisfactory and for some aspects of design technology it is unsatisfactory. Recreational space is very limited for the size of the school. Overall, the provision is satisfactory. The distribution of resources in the school is equally mixed, but is satisfactory overall.

## **Sixth form**

34. The curriculum offered in the sixth form is good with a wide range of A, AS level and GCSE courses on offer, some in conjunction with the local consortium. These have viable numbers in the majority of subjects. In order to ensure curricular breadth, all students follow AS level courses in general studies and critical thinking. The IB provides an opportunity for greater breadth and challenge. Within the IB the provision in history and biology is good, although take up at this relatively early stage of development is still low for other subjects. The school also collaborates with the local

consortium to offer vocational courses. A high quality advanced vocational course is offered in ICT, as are courses in textiles and resistant materials. This is appropriate in the context of the school and represents improvement since the previous inspection. However, provision within design technology for resistant materials and the application of control technology currently remains unsatisfactory. The school is not currently meeting the statutory requirements of the Hertfordshire agreed syllabus for religious education in Years 12 and 13.

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

The school takes **good** care of students' welfare, health and safety and involves them in its work and development. It also provides good guidance and support for its students, but in places lacks consistency mainly because some good systems are new and also because of staffing turbulence.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good arrangements for monitoring attendance
- House structure provides a good basis for monitoring and promoting personal development
- Good health and safety procedures
- Students are consulted through the house system, school councils and specific questionnaires
- Students are generally aware of their targets
- There is good feedback and discussion in lessons
- Some inconsistencies in the application of systems and assessment. This is partly due to the newness of many of the systems and partly because of staff changes

### **Commentary**

35. The school makes good provision for students' care and welfare including their health and safety. There is very good awareness of child protection procedures and those relating to students in public care. All staff are reminded of procedures at the beginning of the autumn term and new staff are offered in-service training which covers key aspects. The health and safety site governor ensures that there are regular checks and records in place and there are frequent risk assessments in PE. However, the school does not consistently monitor that equipment checks have been completed. For example, checks on the design and technology dust extractors were substantially behind schedule. The system for logging accidents within the school and evaluating patterns and risk areas is well established. This is effective in reducing risk of injury at the school. The medical room is used appropriately and there are good procedures for the administration of medicines. The internet is made safer through rigorous filtering both by the local education authority and by the school's information computer technology department.

36. The transition arrangements from Year 6 into Year 7 are well organised and effective in developing students' self confidence and ownership of the school. *'Don't suffer in silence'* on the school's website offers some invaluable information which illustrates the school's views and advice on bullying. Form tutors, heads of house and the social inclusion officer are proactive in investigating any bullying incidents. Older students have good opportunities to work with younger students to support their learning and reduce bullying. Heads of house would like to see this develop further. The innovative new house system, with its mixed age tutor groups coupled with greater staffing stability has already begun to provide a more consistent approach to pastoral support to raise standards, create a stronger sense of community and reduce bullying in the school.

37. The procedures to monitor attendance by form tutors and heads of house are very good. Recently appointed social inclusion officers respond to first day absence by telephoning parents who appreciate and support this initiative. Subject teachers monitor attendance at lessons.

38. Students' academic progress and personal development are monitored well and form the basis of academic review days, when tutors and students set targets. Parents are kept informed and invited to surgeries where they have opportunities to discuss their children's progress. Parents report that they generally have a good understanding of their children's attainment and progress. In some houses, form tutors are released by the head of house to spend time with individual students

to support and mentor them. In subject areas, the use of assessment to provide advice and guidance to students is not consistent enough across different subjects and within subjects. For example in mathematics, assessment is not providing students with enough individual guidance on how to improve. In design and technology, new staff have a limited understanding of students' previous attainment which makes individual target setting difficult. The effectiveness and consistency of target setting and the development of productive dialogue with students about their progress is a priority within the school development plan and training has already been provided.

39. The school surveys the views of its students through questionnaires, the website and the school council. House council meetings, held once each half term, feed agenda items into the school council. Chaired by the head boy and girl, ideas and views are discussed and resolved. Representatives were able to express valid and constructive views on a range of matters. The system of collecting and acting upon students' views is still relatively new. Over time, the council could take greater responsibility for the management, minute taking and facilitating of such meetings without the intense input from staff.

40. Students with special educational needs are well cared for within the school. A stable, committed team of learning support teachers and assistants ensures that the welfare of vulnerable students is monitored closely. A lunch-time club is available and students are paired with peers to support them both in class and around the school.

41. The social inclusion unit is well managed within the school. This is a relatively new service which has the potential to improve behaviour and reduce exclusions further. While there is a need to provide consistent, rigorous approaches to behaviour management the emphasis on quality identification, target setting and planned interventions will reduce the need for punitive measures if this is applied early enough and consistently across the school. Where there is co-ordination between heads of house, form tutors, learning support and parents, provision is good.

## **Sixth form**

42. The school provides good support and guidance for its sixth form students and there are good procedures for monitoring their attendance and punctuality. Students are offered training and encouraged to participate in mentoring schemes with younger students. They are supportive of the house system by acting as role models for younger students and taking up the mentoring role. However morning registration is less well attended because sixth form students are able to sign in independently. This provides fewer opportunities to meet and relate to younger members of the tutor group.

43. Innovative ideas ascertain students' views and involve them in the work of the school. In the autumn term 2003, students were encouraged to provide feedback between the school's perceptions and the reality of life in the sixth form. The school council provides a forum for students' views to be heard although many students feel that they would like a broader forum for sharing their ideas and influencing all aspects of school life and in general students felt that the school did not always seek and respond to their views.

44. Induction arrangements for the transition into the sixth form are good. Students reported that the organisation of an 'It's a knockout' competition, a school council suggestion, provided an excellent opportunity for sixth form students to get to know each other, have fun and create trusting, lasting relationships.

## Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school continues to have **good** links with parents with effective communication between school and home and **very good** links with the community and other schools and colleges, especially in the planned transfer of students at different stages.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school continues to foster good links with parents, who value the wide range of information they receive, newsletters, website etc
- Curriculum evenings and work to find out about their children's learning provide many opportunities for parents to come into school
- Very good links with the community support and extend the work of the school
- Links with other schools and colleges, especially when moving from one phase of their education to the next and upon entry to the school, are very good
- Some parents are not as supportive of the school and its expectations as they could be

### Commentary

45. Parents are kept well informed, they are happy with the range of information, which is very good and successfully helps them to keep abreast of what is happening in school. Through regular newsletters, parents' surgeries, the academic review days and on the school's website, parents have good opportunities to find out about the progress their children are making. The *Learning to Learn* evening for parents of students in Year 7 was well attended and helped parents to understand and support their children at home. The academic review day is an open event and in the summer term parents receive the students' written annual reports; the format of these is presently being revised to provide a better range of information.

46. The school seeks parents' views through regular surveys and these are mainly positive. Procedures for dealing with complaints are good, they are efficient and are handled well by the school. Most parents support their children's learning well; they use the students' planners but indicate that after Year 7 there is little response from the teacher. A few parents are less supportive of the school and others had concerns about the impact of the many staffing changes, which the inspection team found had caused some disruption for some students.

47. The school has close links with Broxbourne Borough Council and Herts Regional College, and acts as a very effective educational and leisure resource for the local community. Adult education classes, summer schools and the use of sports facilities are extremely beneficial. The new arts centre, which was supported financially by parents, the Borough Council and the Parents' Association is also available for use by the community.

48. The 'school's curriculum award' was received for links with the community and these links include substantial sponsorship by a supermarket group and involvement in a range of work experience with banks and other local businesses. Almost 200 students took part. Students from Years 10 and 11 are also attending a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) course (which is a work-related programme) at local colleges. Selected students have attended Maths Master Classes at the University of Hertfordshire. The school takes part in many sporting activities with other schools in the district and has had many successful productions including taking the runner-up place in the Barnet and District Festival for a production of *Mother Courage*.

49. The transition from primary school is also managed very well, teachers visit and teach in the primary feeder schools and there are very many opportunities for students to take part in activities. The school has very good links with primary schools and French and German are taught to Year 6 pupils by departmental staff. These include a summer language school as well as an on-line transition course aimed at bridging the gap smoothly. An initiative has just started using video conferencing to teach primary French using the French assistant. Students in Year 7 spoke very highly of the help they had received. In Years 9 and 11 students and their parents are also very appreciative of the guidance they have received during these vital changeover periods. The school has just started to provide lessons in Italian for the community.

50. A range of good links has been established with universities and further education colleges. Students are provided with good guidance and a range of good information, which helps them make informed choices about getting the best from their further education and future training. In the 'critical thinking' classes staff have given good advice to students preparing their 'personal statement' for University.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The school's leadership is **good** and the management is **satisfactory**, overall. The head teacher provides innovative and determined leadership and the leadership team is strong and effective. Together with most other managers they show a clear commitment to raising standards in the school. Governors are well informed and both challenge and support improvement and the achievement of high standards. The school operates efficiently on a day to day level, but some good systems are new and not yet having as much impact as the school would like. Staffing difficulties have also had an impact.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The governors are well informed about the strengths and weaknesses of the school
- The head teacher's leadership is innovative with a clear focus on teaching and learning in order to meet the needs of a changing clientele
- The quality of school self-evaluation is good
- The quality of performance management and academic reviews is good
- Professional development is good, especially for teaching, learning, literacy and the use of ICT
- The school finances are well managed to meet educational needs and priorities
- Some whole-school policies are not consistently implemented and some new systems and procedures are not yet having the impact intended
- Performance data are not being used consistently in all subjects
- The increase in the size of the school has not yet been fully reflected in funding and this has affected class sizes and teacher contact ratios and in turn placed pressure on staff
- The difficulties in recruiting staff in certain subject areas, notably mathematics and design technology, have affected standards

### **Commentary**

51. The head teacher's innovation and commitment to the school and its community have been significant factors in the quality of provision. He leads a school that is oversubscribed and achieves good standards. In placing a determined focus on the quality of teaching and learning, he has sought to respond to the change in the school clientele over recent years; which is reflected overall in lower attainment levels on entry. The strong and efficient senior leadership team ably support the head teacher in giving a clear lead to the school's work. The introduction of the mixed age tutor groups and the re-establishment of a strong house system is a good example of this response and is a positive development, which though still relatively new, has been well managed and is starting to have an effect on students' attitudes.

52. The governing body is effective. Governors are supportive of the school and have good links with parents and the local community. They take their responsibilities seriously, notably by helping to shape the school's priorities for improvement, monitoring the school's spending and working in partnership with key staff. They have a good understanding about how well the school is performing and have established appropriate procedures and committees to ensure that they fulfil their role. Their expertise is well used. Governors meet their legal obligations except for the provision of religious education in the sixth form. The policy for collective worship has the potential to meet statutory requirements, but it is not being implemented consistently enough to do so.

53. The leadership team has been effective in establishing a common understanding and purpose amongst all staff on key priorities, such as the quality of teaching and learning. *Learning to Learn* days in particular have sharpened the focus on basic teaching strategies and techniques of classroom management. The overall monitoring and evaluation of teaching also involves the head teacher, leadership team and faculty managers. The school-wide programme of academic reviews is effective. Performance management is also well used to secure improvement and raise standards. However, senior managers and governors are very aware that a number of initiatives have not had time to be as effective as they need to be, or as they want them to be, and accept that a period of consolidation and further monitoring is essential.

54. Overall, the school knows its strengths and weaknesses and is taking appropriate and well-prioritised action to address the change in attitudes and tendency towards disaffection that have reflected the change in the intake. However, in some areas communication is not having sufficient impact. For instance, the aims and objectives for the students' attitudes and behaviour, which are promoted strongly by senior staff, are not reaching all students. This is mainly because of inconsistency in the way in which school policies are interpreted by staff and students. In its daily work, the school does not yet effectively demonstrate that it is a harmonious community of students with a strong corporate ethos.

55. The good school improvement plan is reflected in faculty and subject development plans. The leadership of the faculties is effective, overall and has a positive impact upon students' achievements. The leadership and management of subjects are good, overall with strong features in history, music and physical education. It is unsatisfactory in geography and though broadly satisfactory it has been affected by staffing issues in mathematics and design and technology. Very good teamwork, thorough curriculum planning and good use of performance data are characteristics of the most effective subject management. Most subject leaders manage developments well and keep up-to-date and well informed about how well their intentions are being realised by observing teachers at work, monitoring students' work and analysing results. Subject leaders are generally well supported and challenged by the heads of faculty and the leadership team, though this has not been fully effective in ensuring consistency particularly where staff turnover has been a factor. Professional development opportunities are good, especially in teaching, learning, literacy and the use of ICT.

56. Financial planning is good and resources are well managed to meet educational needs and priorities. Administrative systems work well. The school budget is under considerable pressure as the school has expanded in size. This has not yet been fully reflected in funding which has affected class sizes and teacher contact ratios and in turn placed pressure on staff.

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

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	£4,479,120	Balance from previous year	£72070
Total expenditure	£4,527,061	Balance carried forward to the next	£25,727
Expenditure per pupil	£3,601		

57. The head teacher, senior team and governors are keenly aware of the issues affecting recruitment and retention of staff. They have faced up to the many challenges presented both by the national shortages of specialist teachers and the particular circumstances that face a school on the fringes of London. Some imaginative and successful initiatives have been introduced. Senior staff have actively sought to find ways of reducing the number of additional duties, and minimising the administration load required of teachers, by employing non-teaching staff to carry out these tasks. Some aspects of this initiative are more advanced than others and some are still quite new and not yet embedded in the life of the school. However, a notable success to date has been the deployment of supervisors to oversee work set by colleagues who are absent. Senior staff recognise that there is

still much to do to make the systems run more smoothly and for teaching and non-teaching staff to work more closely together in order to maximise the benefits and to achieve the objectives.

58. As a training institution, the school trains and recruits teachers with overseas qualifications, newly-qualified teachers and trainee teachers. It also supports established staff wishing to update and improve their skills and expertise. The school offers a comprehensive programme of in-house support and training opportunities devised by teachers and visiting speakers. Advanced skills teachers have played a pivotal role in improving teaching and learning and in sharing good practice across the school. The proportion of good and very good teaching is higher than at the time of the last inspection. The school also offers training opportunities to modern languages staff in local primary and secondary schools.

59. The management of special educational needs is satisfactory. Priorities have recently been revised and the special educational needs team is now more closely linked to pastoral and academic structures. The teacher in charge of learning support has the brief to coordinate the work of the department to complement other pastoral and academic systems within the school. This has the potential to further support whole-school approaches to target setting and review for students with additional educational needs including those with special educational needs.

### **Sixth form**

60. The leadership and management of the sixth form are good and reflect the strengths seen elsewhere in the school. Day-to-day management is effective. The sixth form staff work have a clear view of areas that are in need of improvement and are keen to see that students are encouraged to widen their interests and take full advantage of the many opportunities available to them. The monitoring of teaching and learning and of the standards reached in subjects is effective and contributes to the good standards being achieved. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the sixth form and challenge and support its managers effectively. They are for example keen to monitor closely the success of implementation of the International Baccalaureate.

## **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**

- Results at both Key Stages 3 and 4 are above average overall but with fewer higher grades
- Leadership is dynamic and providing staff with a clear agenda for improvement
- Teaching is good and leading to improved standards
- An excellent database exists to assist pupil tracking but this is not yet used uniformly across the department to inform work with individual students
- Assessment and marking are not rigorous, specific or consistent enough in Years 7 to 9
- The poor attitudes and behaviour of a significant minority of students inhibit learning
- Resources and accommodation are very good
- School policies are not always consistently implemented
- The department is committed, vigorous, innovative and enthusiastic

##### **Commentary**

61. Attainment on entry is above average this year but this is not typical of previous entries as the criteria for entry have varied. Results for both boys and girls in the national curriculum tests at the end of Year 9, in 2003, were above the national average, but were lower at the higher levels when compared with national averages and what students had previously achieved. Boys' results have been declining. Evaluation of results has led to some changes already and the department is treating raising standards in Years 7 to 9 as a priority. Standards seen in lessons and in students' work, indicate satisfactory progress and achievement. Students have mostly good relationships with teachers. Speaking and listening skills are satisfactory. Some students answer questions readily and with confidence whilst others are passive. Reading and writing skills are average for students of this age.

62. At GCSE at age 16, results are above average but again with relatively fewer higher grades and not as good as in previous years. However, given the variation in year groups, they were broadly in line with what could be expected from their standards when these students started the school. The E to G grades are above the national averages, suggesting that lower-attaining students are achieving well. Standards are average and achievement in the current Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall when compared to their results in Year 9.

63. The teaching in Years 7 to 9 is good overall and a proportion is very good. The best lessons were well planned, timed, resourced and structured with logical learning steps leading to clear objectives. Tasks were suitably varied to take account of different learning styles and concentration spans, so that even the potentially disruptive students were challenged to learn. The learning in these lessons was also good as students were actively and enthusiastically engaged. Targets were manageable and students knew how to achieve them. Good literacy strategies were helping reluctant writers and extension tasks stimulated the higher-attaining students. Teachers know their students well and keep good records of their progress. Work in students' books shows a good range of activities although writing tasks in Years 7 and 8 tend to be rather short and learning is not obviously structured. At Year 9, however, there is more extended writing and evidence of students' learning being gradually built up through logical tasks. ICT is used well to improve the presentation of work. However, the work in students' books showed that there is still too much variation in practice across the department and policies are not yet firmly embedded. In the best teaching, the marking policy is used well, but this is not consistent enough. Some targets are vague and students would find these hard to achieve. Too little attention is given to spelling mistakes. Specific comments as to

how students could improve their performance are rare. Homework, though thoroughly appropriate, is inconsistently set. This means that overall the learning is not yet as good as the teaching.

64. The quality of teaching in Years 10 and 11 is good and in some instances, very good. In the good lessons, the very clear objectives, shared with the students, were closely linked to examination criteria. Logical tasks enabled students to work towards achieving the learning objectives. Students were required to think critically for themselves and activities were varied and timed to ensure a challenging pace. Students were treated as mature adults and expectations were high and students responded enthusiastically. The coursework seen demonstrates more structured learning and more rigorous marking than in Years 7 to 9. The range of writing was good and appropriate homework was set. Good use was made of excellent resources. In a few lessons, including one unsatisfactory lesson, poor attitudes and behaviour were inhibiting learning. As a result, teachers spent a great deal of energy and effort trying to combat this. Though learning is good, there are still some inconsistencies in the use of the target system, self-assessment and the use of writing frames.

65. The leadership and management are very good and the team is led by example. The department is very clear that raising standards is a priority and the action being taken is improving the quality of work. This has not yet had time to be reflected in better test and examination results. However, the observation of teaching, improvements to the curriculum and an excellent database for tracking students' achievement are proving to be effective, though the information from the database is not used by all teachers as effectively as it could be. A good range of activities such as reading, film and drama clubs, competitions, theatre trips, Shakespeare days, master classes and writing opportunities in a 'curriculum week' all help to extend and enrich the curriculum. In an effort not to overburden the department, little delegation has taken place and so monitoring of the various initiatives though taking place, is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure that staff are consistent in their practices. The improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. However, the expertise, vigour and commitment within the department mean that it has the capacity and the will to improve rapidly.

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

66. The school's management team, recognising that literacy and language skills are fundamental, has integrated them very fully into staff training in teaching and learning skills. Booklets on literacy skills, such as spelling and reading for information, *Learning to Learn* days for Year 7 and curriculum weeks, with a focus on different types of writing for different audiences and purposes, are all supporting the development of good literacy skills. Work in tutor groups is also used to reinforce the skills. Key words are displayed, used and explained and, in subjects such as design and technology, writing guides and word banks are used regularly to help students with written work. These strategies are evaluated regularly by staff and students and are having a positive effect on learning and standards.

### **Modern foreign languages**

As a specialist language college, the school offers courses in several languages and the provision has expanded since the last inspection. The main focus of the inspection was on French, German and Spanish but work in Japanese and Italian was sampled. The Japanese and Italian courses are beginners' course which start in Year 9 and lead to GCSE. In the Japanese lesson sampled, the teaching, learning and achievement were good. Students could decipher some written symbols and engaged in a short dialogue to introduce themselves. They repeated individual words and phrases accurately. The teacher used ICT very effectively to enhance learning. In the Italian lesson sampled the teaching, learning and achievement were satisfactory. With support students could talk about families with satisfactory pronunciation. The foreign language assistant had a very positive impact on students' learning.

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

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The good leadership and management of the department resulting in staff working well as a team
- The very good linguistic competence of teachers provides a good model for students
- Standards in Year 9 are above average and students have achieved well
- Staffing difficulties have resulted in under achievement and low standards in some groups
- The effective deployment of the foreign language assistants motivates students and helps raise standards
- The very good assessment of students' work and target setting helps students to make good progress
- The excellent accommodation, display and resources enhance teaching and learning

## **Commentary**

67. In Year 7, all students take two modern foreign languages. Some students have done French or German at primary school and in the language summer school and the department successfully builds upon the previous knowledge of these students by organising two express classes. Results in examinations in 2003 were above what is expected nationally at the age of fourteen. Girls attained higher results than boys in all languages.

68. All comparisons with national results need to be treated with caution, however, since the school enters a much higher percentage of the cohort than is entered nationally for languages. The school's results are, therefore, portrayed in a less favourable light when compared with national statistics. GCSE results in 2003 were just below average in French, well below average in German, just above average in Spanish and broadly in line with national expectations in Italian. Results have been affected by staffing difficulties and were significantly worse in French and German and slightly worse in Spanish when compared with the 2002 GCSE results. The results in Italian were higher than in 2002. This represents significant underachievement in German, some underachievement in Spanish and French and good achievement in Italian. Girls did better than boys in French and German, but boys did better than girls in Spanish and performed well above the national average.

69. By the end of Year 9 the standards of French and Spanish observed in lessons and in students' books are above average and in German average. This would indicate that the teacher assessments in modern foreign languages are inflated. This, however, still represents good achievement in French and Spanish and satisfactory achievement in German. Students with English as an additional language and those with special educational needs achieve in line with their peers, because of the clear structure of lessons, the support provided for individuals and the skilful use of visuals, mime and gesture to clarify meaning. In students' written work in languages at the end of Year 9 higher-attainers write longer texts using a range of tenses and write more complex sentences. Middle-attainers write well with support and lower-attainers copy words and sentences accurately. By the end of Year 11, the standards of French and Spanish observed in lessons and in students' books are above average and in German below average. In one Year 11 German class, students had many gaps in very basic vocabulary, confused French and German numbers, had poor listening skills and weak pronunciation. In a Year 11 top set in Spanish, students had very good speaking and listening skills, deduced grammatical patterns and read with confidence and accuracy. Due to disaffection and lack of motivation, some students in modern foreign languages underachieve in spite of effective teaching strategies.

70. Teaching and learning are good in French and Spanish and satisfactory in German. In all three languages there are examples of very good teaching, but some of the teaching and learning in Spanish and German is unsatisfactory. In all three languages students respond well to brisk, well-structured lessons with a range of motivating activities and resources. They learn effectively, when given the opportunity to work in pairs and when the tasks match their needs and interests. This combination was particularly evident in a Year 10 German class of high-attainers, who were stimulated by activities focusing on word order in the context of talking about leisure activities. In the same lesson, the foreign language assistant made a valuable contribution to students' learning by

providing a native speaker model for oral work. On the occasions when teaching was unsatisfactory, the teacher spoke too much in English, failed to make effective use of the school discipline policy and continued to teach while the students were chatting.

71. The marking of students' work is very thorough and helps them to progress by making standards and expectations very clear. Students understand the level of the work they are producing and know what they must do to reach higher levels. Students' learning is also enhanced by the good relationships between teachers and students in most classes.

72. Leadership and management of the faculty and of departments are good. Teachers share a clear vision and work very hard to achieve their goals. All teachers have very good linguistic competence, which provides a good model for students. Staffing difficulties have resulted in underachievement and low standards in some groups. There is very good administrative support which helps the faculty to run smoothly and efficiently. The effective deployment of the foreign language assistants in most lessons also motivates students and helps raise standards. Assessment and target setting are very good, helping students to make good progress. The good use of ICT, the after-school language clinics and the excellent accommodation and resources enhance learning. The experienced staff offer very good support to the newly qualified and supply teachers. The provision for modern foreign languages has expanded considerably since the last inspection and the department is working hard to compensate for the staffing difficulties. Improvement has been satisfactory.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- High levels of staff turnover have affected the quality of teaching in the longer term and have led to underachievement in Years 7 to 9
- Teaching is good in Years 10 and 11
- Most students have good attitudes, but small groups of unmotivated students make teaching difficult in some classes, especially where the teacher is new to the school
- Not enough use is made of assessment information to help students improve work

### **Commentary**

73. The school has worked hard to recruit and retain well-qualified mathematics teachers. This has proved difficult for several years, and staffing is only now settling down after a period of great turbulence. This has been unsettling, and has led to under-achievement by the end of Year 9. Results in the national Year 9 tests have declined steadily. In 2003, students reached average standards, although their performance was well below that of students who started secondary school with comparable Year 6 results. The 2003 GCSE results were above national averages. Boys outperformed girls, gaining more success at the higher grade A\* to C levels.

74. Overall, standards on entry to the school are above average, although with variation between years. Standards in Year 9 are average overall but as a result of the staffing difficulties, many current Year 9 students have not made the progress that they could have done. Higher-attaining students have a good grasp of arithmetic, algebra and geometry, for example solving linear equations, exploring patterns and finding areas and volumes of complex shapes. Average and lower-attaining students are much less secure in their understanding, with errors often arising from weaknesses in basic calculation skills.

75. Current Year 11 standards are average and students have made satisfactory progress since Year 9. Achievement is satisfactory and boys and girls perform equally well. The highest attaining students have a secure grasp of algebra, graphs, and geometry, for instance using their knowledge of circle theorems to solve practical problems. Average-attaining students have a sound grasp of statistical measures such as the mean and median to describe sets of data. They understand Pythagoras' theorem, but make careless errors when working out calculations. Lower-attaining

students are working at borderline GCSE pass levels, for example exploring how to reflect shapes in various lines and describing what effect this has on the co-ordinates of individual points.

76. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall in Years 7 to 9, but there is more good and very good teaching in Years 10 and 11, making teaching and learning in these classes good overall. Teachers know the subject well and explain new ideas and techniques clearly. However, students are often too passive, listening to the teacher's explanation rather than joining in discussion. At its best, for instance in a lesson on expanding algebraic expressions such as  $(y+2)(y-4)$ , achievement was very good because teachers challenged students to think and work things out for themselves.

77. Recent planning improvements help teachers to ensure that work in most classes is appropriate and challenging. However, in Year 7 mixed ability classes, there is not always enough difference in the work set for students of higher or lower attainment. Support for students with special educational needs is satisfactory. It is good where classroom assistants are available, because students benefit from close support throughout the lesson. Some students also benefit from specialist learning support in extra lessons. This works well, and contributes effectively to the progress these students make.

78. Most students have good attitudes and want to do well. Where teachers are well established, class relationships are harmonious and lessons proceed briskly. However, some small groups of students are unresponsive and lack motivation, especially in some classes taken by teachers new to the school. This leads to significant levels of noise and low level disturbance. Teaching pace slows and lessons do not fully achieve their objectives.

79. Teacher assessments ensure that students know how well they are doing in broad terms, but students lack the information they need in order to know what to do to improve. Not enough use is made of learning targets. The quality of marking is very variable. Some teachers show clearly where work contains errors and explain how to put it right. However, this good practice is not widespread, and marking is often little more than a collection of ticks and brief comments about the effort the pupil has made. Not enough use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning. The leadership and management of mathematics are satisfactory, particularly in the light of staffing difficulties in this as in other areas. Improvement since the last inspection has also been satisfactory. Although Year 9 achievement has fallen, students still reach average standards. GCSE results have held up well, and the school has maintained good quality teaching in most years.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

80. This is satisfactory overall. For example, in physical education students competently use a range of data handling techniques to monitor their progress on fitness programmes. In science, students analyse experimental data by graphical methods, and in geography, students use their knowledge of ratio and scale in work on maps.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Well developed lesson plans which contribute to the successful lessons seen
- The substantial proportion of lessons with good teaching and learning
- Some lower sets have a poorly developed learning culture, resulting in low levels of achievement
- Behaviour management strategies are not used effectively with some classes
- The department contains well-qualified and experienced teachers who work well in the pursuit of the department's aims

### **Commentary**

81. Results in the Year 9 national tests in 2003 and at GCSE are in line with national values, indicating satisfactory attainment for these students. The recent two year downward trend in Year 9 results has now been reversed, though the proportion of higher levels is still below the national figure.

Science results are now in between those of mathematics and English and the girls' performance equals that of the boys. At GCSE, the overall percentage of students gaining grades A\*- C is just better than the national figure, though very few students attain the top grade. According to national data, the students' 2003 science results are comparable to their attainment in other subjects, indicating satisfactory levels of achievement for both boys and girls.

82. Standards of work seen during the inspection indicate that satisfactory levels of attainment are being maintained. Most students take an interest in the lessons and respond when prompted. They enjoyed practical work and were confident in handling apparatus. Such opportunities enhance their learning. As a result, levels of achievement are satisfactory overall, and slightly better in Years 7-9. However, in a minority of lessons some older students were poorly motivated and their attitude and behaviour affected the progress of others. In these cases, students' achievements were unsatisfactory. Exercise books are generally well maintained and notes provide the basis for future revision, especially when supplemented with published revision guides. Recording and use of data were appropriate to students' abilities, although graphical skills were not well developed. In the books seen, inconsistencies were present both in the frequency and quantity of marking undertaken. However, when marking was undertaken, this included good advice indicating how improvement could be made.

83. Teaching and learning were satisfactory overall, with just over half of the lessons seen providing examples of good teaching and learning. One lesson in Year 9 was very good. In these lessons, the well-developed plans with clear learning objectives were a factor. Knowledgeable teachers taught the material well and created a sense of fun in the learning. In one lesson, the teacher made very effective use of the department's interactive white board to enhance the learning. In a few lessons in Years 10 – 11, the teaching was unsatisfactory because it did not promote the desired levels of achievement. In these lessons, students were poorly motivated and showed no real desire to learn. At times, the poor behaviour of a small number of students also limited the teaching opportunities and so affected the progress of the whole class. In some lessons where students are in mixed ability groups, the teaching material did not provide adequately for the needs of all students. Although lessons include short 'starter' and plenary sessions, these are not consistently effective in ensuring consolidation of the learning objectives. Questioning techniques were not consistently effective in enhancing the learning or providing feedback from a greater number of students.

84. The areas identified in the previous report as requiring attention have been dealt with and improvement has been satisfactory. Current standards match those obtained previously and students are achieving at the expected levels. Overall teaching standards have improved. The management of the department is satisfactory overall with a greater degree of co-ordination of the three science strands, although updated physics schemes of work are still required. Previous health and safety issues have been resolved. The department is well served by its technicians. Experienced teachers share common aims and the department is well led, with a clear sense of purpose and direction. Priorities are identified and the newly produced department handbook and other documentation provide very clear and comprehensive guidance. The department is well placed to continue to improve.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in ICT is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching is good, overall and sometimes very good
- The provision for students who wish to study the subject outside of the normal school day is very good
- Students in Years 7 to 9 only receive one ICT lesson every two weeks which results in a lack of continuity and progression
- The attitude of students in Years 10 and 11 for whom ICT is a compulsory subject is poor
- Relationships are good and enhance the learning experience

## **Commentary**

85. Students join the school in Year 7 with standards in line with the national average. Year 9 assessments and GCSE results are above average. Current standards in ICT are very similar.

86. Achievement in lessons is good, overall. However, there are examples of both very good achievement and unsatisfactory achievement. The achievement of those students in Years 10 and 11 who have chosen to study the subject is generally good. The department provides ICT as an additional vocational GCSE qualification. This provision is very good. The achievement of the students involved in this additional study is also very good. Some students in Years 10 and 11 have to study ICT as a compulsory subject. The attitude of these students is poor and they show little interest in the subject. The achievement of these students is unsatisfactory. All students study for a combined course of citizenship and ICT. This leads to a GCSE qualification in both subjects. The ICT provision in this course is very good.

87. Students in Years 7 to 9 have one ICT lesson every two weeks. Students find it hard to remember what they have been doing from one lesson to the next. The school has adopted the national strategy, but it is not being delivered in full because of the time restrictions. Students are generally enthusiastic about the subject. The long term achievement of students in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory but restricted because of the length of time spent at the start of each lesson revising previous work.

88. The quality of teaching and learning is good, overall. It is sometimes very good. The use of the computers is very good. Teachers' marking in Years 10 and 11 is frequent, enabling students to work continuously and individually in lessons. The teachers' assessments of students in Years 7 to 9 are restricted because of the limited time for which the teachers see the students. The use of a computer-controlled white board has a very good impact on students' learning because basic skills are taught quickly and efficiently to the whole class. Teachers' good management skills ensure that students remain on task and that lessons move with pace. The department's assessment procedures are good: results are recorded and stored on the computer. In the very good teaching, reference to marked coursework is very good at the start of lessons because it enables students to improve. In the good lessons the good whole-class discussions which conclude the lessons widen students' knowledge through the sharing of ideas. In a few lessons, teachers talk for too long at the start of the lesson which restricts the rate of learning. The relationship between teachers and students is good and enhances learning. Minor acts of indiscipline are tackled without interruption to the lesson.

89. The focus of the ICT department is on raising standards in the subject. Examination syllabuses have been reviewed in order to provide the students with the best possible opportunity. The teachers in the department act as a mutually supportive and cohesive team. There has been good progress in the subject since the last inspection. The leadership and management of ICT are good.

## **ICT across the curriculum**

90. Progress in the area of ICT across the curriculum, since the time of the last inspection, has been very good. The provision for ICT across the curriculum is very good and students use ICT very well. Most subject areas have incorporated ICT into the lessons. A good example of this was seen in history where students used the school's website to research into some of the personalities involved in the Second World War. The teachers provide good role models in the use of ICT. All teachers are provided with laptop computers. Good use is made of this facility. Many teachers use their laptops for lesson planning, assessment purposes and to aid lesson delivery. In some subjects, such as humanities, students are permitted to submit work electronically.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

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

- Individual teachers plan effectively and use a range of appropriate methods to interest students; their subject knowledge is very good
- Standards are generally above average
- Some students' attitudes to learning are poor and hamper their own and others' progress
- Weaknesses in the leadership and management of the subject mean that the assessment is not consistent and students are not clear about how to improve their work

#### **Commentary**

91. The results of Year 9 assessments in 2003 were above those reported nationally. Boys did better overall, but girls did better at higher grades and were at the average for these grades. GCSE examination results in 2003 were just above the national average, broadly in line with past results; boys did significantly better than they did in their other subjects.

92. In Year 9, standards are above average, and achievement is good, as students enter the school with average attainment, but with patchy experience of the essential skills and ideas of geography. Year 7 teachers work well to remedy this, so that they are above average by the year end. In Year 11, standards are just above average because teachers continue their high expectation and explain requirements well. Current achievement is satisfactory and students can mostly demonstrate improved grades since starting the course, in line with their predicted targets.

93. Teaching and learning are both good for all year groups. Individual teachers use a good range of methods and all lessons are well planned and structured so as to ensure basic understanding and to meet most students' needs. In the best lessons, students participate fully and actively, responding well to the well-supported challenges set. For example, in two Year 8 lessons, students worked independently and well, in pairs and groups, and thought for themselves about interesting and relevant issues: they then presented their well-developed ideas imaginatively, demonstrating a high level of understanding. It was clear here that all achieved their potential. In a significant minority of lessons the negative attitudes of some students result in low achievement for them, and reduce the achievement of others. Here teaching methods are not well enough adapted to all students' needs. Most students in all years can explain the broad level at which they are working, and older students, in particular, are clear about their target grades. Few, however, understand in any detail how exactly to improve, as improvements to the way work is assessed are recent and have not yet had widespread impact.

94. Leadership and management of the department, within the faculty, are unsatisfactory. The progress made and the standards reached are very much the result of the work of individual teachers. There is no consistent drive, direction or strategy to improve the achievement of all students, by thoroughly reviewing and planning the performance of the department as a whole. Despite recent developments, many issues raised at the last inspection have not been tackled, so improvement has been unsatisfactory. In particular the lack of full schemes of work, linked to consistently moderated marking, assessment and evaluation, has hindered progress. As a result the department has no secure view of how successful it really is.

## History

Provision for history is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good
- Teaching is very good and sometimes excellent
- Excellent curriculum materials effectively structure students' learning
- Leadership is highly effective and management is good
- Assessment procedures are effective
- The use of ICT is good
- Key Stage 3 data could be used more to monitor progress and achievement
- Students are too reticent in some lessons

### Commentary

95. Standards are above national expectations in both key stages. In 2003 teachers' assessment of students' performance at the end of year 9 indicates above average attainment overall, with girls achieving well above the national average. There is a similar pattern at GCSE where more students attained A\* to C grades than did so nationally. Boys' attainment is close to national averages whereas girls' results are significantly higher than these.

96. Achievement is very good in Years 7 to 9. Students successfully build on historical knowledge and understanding through increasingly critical use of sources. They write structured accounts, synthesising information from a wide range of evidence. Recall of historical facts is very good and conceptual understanding of cause, consequence and change in history is well developed. Students make confident and effective use of ICT for researching and presenting assignments. Independent learning skills are successfully developed through good quality homework assignments.

97. Achievement is also very good in Years 10 and 11. Students acquire the skills and confidence to write at length, follow lines of enquiry and construct coherent historical arguments. Written work is of a high and sometimes very high standard, frequently enhanced by students' effective use of ICT as a tool for researching, structuring and presenting their work.

98. History teaching is of a very good quality, characterised by high levels of consistency between teachers. Examples of excellent practice were observed in both key stages. Particular strengths of teaching include high levels of specialist knowledge, highly effective questioning, high expectations and brisk, interesting delivery. These qualities are underpinned by extremely well designed learning materials that provide variety, differentiate for students at different levels of understanding and systematically structure learning experiences. Teaching of such a consistently high quality impacts directly to produce very good learning. Students enjoy the challenge of history lessons and attitudes to learning are positive. However, in some classes they lack confidence in asking questions and contributing to class discussions.

99. History is very well led within the humanities faculty. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The team is strong and cohesive. Management is good, with many areas of real strength. However, more use needs to be made of overall Key Stage 3 results to monitor progress and measure improvement. Assessment is an area of strength; students are well aware of the levels at which they are achieving and what they need to do to improve further. Use of e-mail for submission of assignments and on-line marking are recent, successful initiatives targeted at raising boys' attainment that are beginning to have a positive impact.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is well planned and most students learn well because they are suitably challenged and interested in lessons
- A significant number of students do not achieve sufficiently well, partly because they ignore the good supportive marking comments of their teachers
- There are clear procedures designed to improve students' achievement and raise GCSE results
- The programme of study at GCSE gives students a good opportunity to discuss key moral and social issues that are very relevant to their own lives

### Commentary

100. Results of teacher assessment in 2003 show that 14 year old students' attainment was average and they achieved satisfactorily. GCSE short course results in 2003 were below average. These results were significantly lower than those of the two previous years and many students under achieved. The courses give all students opportunity to explore issues about world religions and their practices. Work in Years 7 to 9 covers the six major world faiths and complies with the Hertfordshire agreed syllabus, although the time available for the course is below the recommendation. Work in the GCSE short course is based on Christian and Islamic beliefs about moral and social issues that are very relevant to students' own lives.

101. Students enter Year 7 with very different levels of knowledge, skill and understanding of religion. Standards in Year 9 at present are average. They achieve satisfactorily. Students in the present Years 10 and 11 including those with special educational needs, acquire a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and teachings. Their achievement overall is satisfactory.

102. Teaching and learning are generally good. During the inspection, where lessons were very well planned, delivered at good pace and challenged students appropriately, they achieved well. Skilful teaching about abortion in a Year 11 class enabled students to question and challenge religious views about this very controversial topic. In the GCSE short course, students' work is generally well marked and they are shown how they can improve their grades. Most therefore are making good progress. In Years 7, 8 and 9 teachers' comments generally give students a clear idea how to improve. Most students follow this guidance and achieve well. However, a significant number of students under achieve failing to complete tasks and not responding to teachers' advice. There is no rigorous follow up when this happens. Occasionally tasks are not sufficiently challenging for the higher-attaining students.

103. The leadership and management of religious education are satisfactory. There are clear plans to raise students' achievement. The difficulties in staffing have had an adverse impact on the progress of many students. The decision to use humanities' teachers to teach the subject is already helping students to improve their standards. Revision of the schemes of work and the monitoring of teaching and learning are beginning to develop a strong programme. Assessment of students' progress based on the national curriculum levels is satisfactory, but more regular checks on homework and marking are necessary. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Many good developments are taking place at present, but their full impact has yet to be evaluated.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology consists of product design courses in food technology, resistant materials, graphics and textiles taught throughout Years 7 to 11. Electronics product design GCSE is now on offer to Year 10, along with the other subjects.

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results have improved and are above average
- Standards and achievement in food technology are good
- Assessment and monitoring is not responsive enough to students' needs
- The schemes of work are not well enough organised to provide good support for staff
- The staffing difficulties have had an adverse affect on standards and achievement
- Teaching varies from very good to some that is unsatisfactory

### Commentary

104. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 show standards as well above average but these have been recognised by the school to be over-generous. Previous assessments show high, but declining achievements. Girls do better than boys. Standards and achievement have been affected by staffing difficulties and as a result students are below average in Year 9 and doing similar work to Year 8 students in order to catch up on work missed. The standards and achievements in food technology and textiles are far higher than those in resistant materials and graphics where there has been a shortage of specialist subject teachers. GCSE results are above average and have made good improvement over the last three years. The girls' results have improved more rapidly than the boys, and their results are well above average. Boys do less well and their results are average, and compared to other subjects in the school, boys do less well. Overall achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11.

105. During the inspection the students' attitudes and behaviour was always good and often very good, and students were able to work independently with tools and equipment. For example, in food technology they were very good because of the skilful teaching, tight timing and the high expectations demanded of students. When the students with special educational needs get good support from the learning assistants and teachers they make satisfactory progress. Though overall, they achieve at least as well as other students, their progress is less successful when this support is not pre-arranged and planned.

106. The work of GCSE students is above average. Standards shown in the design work of food technology and textiles are good, and the students know what they have to do to improve because of the good target setting, monitoring and advice. Students are now doing far better in resistant materials and graphics because they now have specialist teachers and access to ICT to help them complete coursework. Their practical work is however lagging behind students in textiles who are competently using computer-aided manufacturing, and industrial processes. Students in food technology and textiles are disadvantaged because they do not have the same easy access to ICT for their folder-work.

107. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is varied and the new team of teachers have not had sufficient time to spread good practice. The good uses of cultural influences in textiles and food technology have links to different faiths. This positively promotes the diversity of the school and encourages students to share experiences. Due to timetabling and staff shortages, a resistant materials specialist has to teach some Year 7 food technology. One food technology room is undersized, it is very cramped in practical lessons. Students studying resistant materials and graphics are getting good use of computer-aided design; however, computer control technology is not being taught.

108. The leadership of the team is good and this has helped to lessen the impact of staffing issues and the new team is working well together. Despite difficulties in attracting specialist teachers for this subject, the results have improved but other issues in the last report still remain. Schemes of work are not sufficiently organised and planned to enable teachers to have consistent approaches. Monitoring is not efficient due to the lack of management use of ICT. Health and safety monitoring is not recorded and formalised. Consequently the management of the department is unsatisfactory.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

Drama is taught as a separate subject in Years 7 to 9 and at GCSE. It was not inspected in depth but on the basis of the sampling, the provision in drama is very good. In Years 10 and 11, drama is offered as an examination option at GCSE. In 2003 results were higher than the national averages. The drama resources and accommodation are very good, and classes always have a specialist area in which to do the subject. The teaching is good. Students are used to routines in the subject and learning is consolidated and developed across the years. Students enjoy the subject. They develop in confidence and in the ability to interpret and present. They are achieving well. Drama is an asset to personal and social development.

### **Art**

Provision in art is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Examination results have improved dramatically and standards in Year 11 are very high
- Teachers' command of their subject and their ability to inspire and motivate students leads to very good achievement
- Teachers use of a wide range of teaching and learning styles add to students' enjoyment of the subject and fosters positive attitudes to learning
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good
- A minority of students have weaker attitudes, waste time and disrupt the learning of others

### **Commentary**

109. In 2003, teacher assessments of standards at the end of Year 9 were above average. In recent years there has been a dramatic rise in standards. The 2003 GCSE results were very high compared with the average. Students generally achieved much higher standards in art and design than in their other examinations. Although few boys take the subject, those that did also achieved very well.

110. In current Year 9 classes, standards are above expectation and students' achievement is good. When students join the school most have very limited experiences and achievement in the subject. By Year 9 they have made good progress. The basic skills of drawing and painting, and a growing awareness and understanding of artists' work, contribute positively to students' work. They speak confidently about their decision-making and annotations in sketchbooks demonstrate good research skills and use of subject-specific terminology. The use of computers, to gather information and to manipulate images, has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now a strong feature of the work of all students in all years. Students begin Year 10 well prepared for the rigors of an examination course and continue to develop the technical skills that underpin the very high quality sketchbooks. Their enjoyment and enthusiasm for the subject is reflected in the depth and creativity shown in their work. By the end of Year 11 standards are very high and students are achieving very well.

111. Teaching is very good overall but more variable in younger classes. The weaker attitudes of some younger students occasionally get in the way and slow the learning of others. Teaching and learning is consistently strong in Years 10 and 11 and at times it is outstanding. Teamwork and communication amongst teachers is excellent. Work reviews and target setting have proved to be extremely successful in both informing students what to do to improve and in inspiring and

challenging them to go beyond what they thought they were capable of. With good quality information, students develop and practise the skills that lead to independent decision-making. A wide variety of teaching and learning styles - small group and whole-class teaching, question-and-answer sessions and 'power point' presentations are used to excellent effect.

112. Leadership and day-to-day management are very good. Developing the schemes of work and improving the range of teaching and learning styles has proved extremely successful. Teachers are at the forefront of the development of strategies for assessing and monitoring students' progress – in the school and the local education authority. Standards in examinations are now well above the average and more higher grades and levels are predicted in the future. Huge strides have been made in the use of computer generated art and design work but access to computers is still restricted for some classes. The accommodation is much improved. However, as the subject has gained in popularity the existing storage space is now inadequate. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Results at GCSE continue to be well above average
- Teaching overall is very good
- The department is very well led and managed
- A very good range of extra-curricular opportunities are available to students
- Opportunities for students in Years 9 – 11 to use information and communication technology in their music studies are restricted

## **Commentary**

113. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were above average, and the GCSE examination results at the end of Year 11 were well above average, with almost all students gaining A\* to C grades. Standards observed in lessons during the inspection and in students' work are above national expectations at the end of Year 9 and well above at the end of Year 11. The students enter school with an average attainment in music. Achievement is good at the end of Year 9 and very good at the end of Year 11. In lessons, the support offered to all students, particularly those with special educational needs, is very good and helps everyone to achieve as well as they are able.

114. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Staff have very good subject knowledge and skills which encourage students to try hard at the required task and develop their understanding. Through the structure of lessons, including good plenaries, students' previous skills are consolidated and built upon. Very good targeted questioning is used, although some teacher intervention occurs too soon which reduces the opportunities for independent learning. Learning objectives are made clear at the beginning of every lesson, so students are focused on what they will be learning. Resources are used imaginatively, for example in a Year 11 lesson, where all students, using their own instruments as well as keyboards and rhythmic clapping, within minutes produced a creditable performance of a difficult piece of salsa music. Not enough opportunities are given to students to sing in lessons, but they collaborate well when using the keyboards and, together with positive relationships between students and staff, create an environment which is conducive to learning.

115. The leadership and management of music are very good. The department is currently in transition under an acting head of department, but the team of three class teachers and twelve peripatetic staff are led well and focused on raising achievement. Setting up assessment procedures and re-writing the schemes of work have been recent priorities and these continue to drive the department forward. A strength of each lesson is the opportunity given to students to appraise each other's progress by performing what they have achieved to the rest of the class. The enthusiasm of

staff is transferred to the students, particularly in Years 10 and 11. The use of ICT in lessons is satisfactory because of the use of keyboards and recording equipment, but students in Years 9 to 11 do not have enough opportunity to use computers on which to create their compositions. The subject makes a good contribution to the spiritual, social and multi-cultural development of students through studying the music of other countries such as India, Indonesia, China and Latin America.

116. Other features of music are the very good range of extra-curricular activities which staff offer, and the primary school concert which is arranged for Year 5 students from the local primary schools by the staff and students at Goffs. Other concerts both in school and in the community are given on a regular basis. The accommodation for music is very good, having recently moved into a new performing arts centre, and resources are good. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, but the use of ICT is an ongoing issue.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students learn complex sports' skills very well because their teachers use their very good subject knowledge and demonstration skills to very good effect
- Students achieve well because the skilful teaching and use of praise encourages them to respond very well and do their best
- The highly committed staff provide a very good extra-curricular programme that helps students achieve very good standards in competitive sports
- Very good leadership and management has provided a much broader and better balanced programme for all students

### **Commentary**

117. Results of the 2003 teachers' assessment of students completing Year 9 were in line with the national average. GCSE results were above the national average. On entry most Year 7 students' skill levels are average. However, those of a significant number of girls are below expectation for their age. Both boys' and girls' knowledge and understanding of performance are just below average. Standards in football, netball and basketball are generally above average amongst students in the present Year 9. In other activities, standards are average and their achievement is good, although a significant number of girls remain below average. In Years 10 and 11 most students achieve well and standards are above average. Standards in competitive games are often well above average, particularly for those taking GCSE. These students achieve very well.

118. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and develop very good relationships with students. During the inspection, very good demonstration of trampoline skills by the teacher enabled students to learn very well how to perform the front drop safely and skilfully in a routine. Students learned well because their teachers set clear targets at the start of lessons. The very good pace and challenge of tasks set in football lessons created a vibrant learning experience that encouraged students to improve their passing, dribbling and off-the-ball skills. As a result, most students achieved well, successfully using these skills in small games. Assessment overall is good. Teachers continually use praise and this encourages students to perform very well. Most students can explain confidently how to improve performance and the teachers make a particular effort to develop accurate the use of sports' vocabulary. Filming performance to help students analyse performance is another very innovative development. A significant number of girls found more complex co-ordination in badminton and volleyball difficult and more work on this in needed.

119. Very good leadership and management have built a strong team. A well-planned, wide range of activities is now available for all students. A recent survey of girls' interests resulted in the development of contemporary dance sessions and a girls' GCSE group. The team is highly committed and the Sportsmark award endorses the very good extra-curricular programme. Talented players are able to perform at district, county and national levels. Very good standards in competitive football, netball and basketball were seen during the inspection. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The increased breadth and balance of the curriculum is a key development. The good teaching and the energy and enthusiasm of the highly committed team have engendered a very positive response by students to their physical education.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

The school teaches vocational courses in ICT, leisure and tourism and GCSE courses in business studies. The GNVQ course in ICT is reported on in the subject section for ICT. And the other subjects were sampled. Results in business studies are **well above** the national average. In general students achieve well and do better in this subject than they do in most other subjects. Leisure and tourism is a new course and as yet there are no examination results. Current students are achieving well, though standards are below the national average.

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

The provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Results at GCSE in 2003 are well above expectations
- A good course which supports the syllabus requirements has been designed within the department
- The quality and impact of the teaching in Years 7 – 9 is inconsistent
- The use of ICT in Years 10 and 11 is very good
- Improvement since the last inspection has been good

### **Commentary**

120. The introduction of a course covering personal, social and health education, citizenship and information and communication technology (referred to by the school as PCI) is an innovation in the curriculum since the last inspection. Originally introduced as a GCSE short course covering PSHE and citizenship through the use of ICT, the curriculum is broad based and fulfils the syllabus requirements. Its more recent introduction in its current form in Years 7 – 9 means that great strides have been made since the last inspection and this good course appropriately meets national requirements.

121. Results in the GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003, the first examinations of the new PCI course, were well above expectations. Standards observed during the inspection are in line with national expectations at the end of Year 9 and above average at the end of Year 11. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 – 9 and good in Years 10 and 11, as seen in a Year 10 lesson where students were discussing criminal and civil laws and using an interactive program on computers. Most students with special educational needs achieve well because of the support they are given by the teacher and through the different routes that are built in to their computer programs in some topics. In Years 7 – 9, a significant minority of students under-achieve because they do not take responsibility for their weaker attitudes. This leads to immature behaviour that is a barrier to higher attainment. Teachers work hard to motivate students, but some students do not demonstrate personal and group responsibility in their attitudes to themselves and others.

122. PCI is taught as a separate subject by a team of fourteen staff drawn from other subject faculties. Teaching in Years 7 – 9 is inconsistent, a weakness noted at the last inspection. Not all staff share a sufficient understanding of the course and its requirements, and some staff are less experienced, but where staff do have sufficient knowledge the subject is taught well. Teaching and learning overall are satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. Good planning and

support materials designed within the department make the learning more effective for all students, including those with special educational needs, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Opportunities to work together and improve communication skills help students to grow in confidence and achieve well, for example in a Year 7 discussion and brainstorming lesson on dealing with conflict. They become much more aware of political, legal and global issues, for example human rights. Topics such as bullying, drugs awareness and euthanasia enable students to face many issues that are morally and ethically challenging. The school council gives students good decision-making opportunities and students are positive about their role.

123. Leadership of the subject is good, because a clear vision has been brought to fruition in practical terms through the development of this good programme of work. Teaching and learning has been monitored through some observation and scrutiny of students' work, but there has been insufficient opportunity to date for some staff to share good practice and to familiarise themselves fully with the materials. Therefore management of the subject is satisfactory. Procedures for assessing and recording students' progress against learning objectives for citizenship are still to be worked out in detail. Accommodation and resources for this subject are good. Improvement since the last inspection, when there was no overall programme in place for personal, social and health education, has been good overall.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002 which is the latest year for which national comparisons are available.

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	5	100	81.6	0	33.2	28	33.2
Classical studies	10	80	95	20	49.9	30	42.3
Communication studies	12	91.7	94.2	16.7	36.1	31.7	38.5
Drama	5	20	94.6	0	37.6	4	39.1
English literature	5	93.3	94.4	6.7	37.9	28.7	38.9
French	6	75	85.4	25	35.2	29.4	34.9
Design and technology	5	40	89.2	20	26.7	14	35.7
Geography	15	70.6	36.4	26.7	36.4	36	36.3
Other social studies	5	20	83.2	0	32.5	4	33.6

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

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	5	100	91.6	20	36.3	64	74.1
Business studies	14	100	96.4	85.7	32.8	104	76.5
Classical studies	9	100	98.5	11.1	66.7	66.7	88
Communication studies	28	100	98.3	25	78.6	78.6	81.1
Drama	8	75	98.1	0	40	40	82.9
Economics	9	100	96.2	33.3	86.7	86.7	83.1
English literature	33	100	98.5	15.2	43.7	66.1	84.3
French	13	100	96.2	15.4	46.1	70.8	83
General studies	77	98.7	90.1	33.8	29.1	78.2	60.3
Geography	20	100	97.1	30	40.5	77	80.9
History	11	100	97.1	27.3	41	70.9	81.2
Mathematics	5	100	93.3	40	52.2	76	84.7
Social studies	9	100	94.3	11.1	38.9	62.2	77.7
Physics	11	90.9	92.8	27.3	42.8	67.3	78.6
Spanish	5	100	96.2	20	47.3	68	83.6

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Sports/PE	9	100	95.4	0	29.5	62.2	73.2
Business Education (vocational)	6	91.7	87.1	0	16.5	53.3	60.1
Information and communication technology (vocational)	27	84.7	84.3	6.8	24.5	56.3	64.3

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The school offers courses in English language and literature and a range of modern languages including the International Baccalaureate in English and French.

The focus was on A Level English, French and Spanish, but French for the international baccalaureate was sampled. One lesson in Year 12 was observed and the teaching, learning and achievement were satisfactory. The standards achieved were average. Attitudes and relationships were good.

### English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Few high grades are achieved
- International Baccalaureate is offered to challenge students
- Some teaching is excellent
- Library resources for independent study are impoverished

### Commentary

124. Attainment on entry to the sixth form is average. Inspection evidence indicates that students are making satisfactory progress and achieving appropriately. Current standards are average. Results are average overall, though few students achieve the higher A - B grades. Girls are achieving higher grades than boys. Students like the sixth form and most complete the course. The work seen demonstrated a good range of texts and assignments which were consistently and critically marked with detailed comments. ICT is used competently. Students were well informed of course requirements and the examination criteria.

125. Some of the teaching and learning was excellent and the rest was never less than satisfactory which reflects the variable expertise and knowledge of the teaching team. In part this is compensated for in the sharing of classes. Students study a wide range of texts and some are challenged to think critically and philosophically. In the excellent IB lesson sampled, the teacher had set a research task encouraging students to work independently. They had done well and presented their findings with a good degree of maturity and confidence. The debate which followed was of a high standard and the majority contributed readily, so that speaking, listening and critical thinking were noticeably better than might be expected at this early stage of the course. The work was cleverly linked not only with the text being studied but with society today. The conclusion of the lesson was excellent because it pulled together all the threads of the lesson in a practical task which catered for different learning styles and ensured that the lesson objectives were achieved. In other lessons, whilst good texts were being studied, the appropriate level of critical thinking, debate and specialist knowledge were not evident. In one lesson, effort was made to encourage students to think further through the use of probing questions but this was inhibited by the low number in the class. In another, the disparity of attainment was not taken into account.

126. The curriculum is good and enhanced by theatre visits. Students also have plenty of opportunity to use their linguistic skills and gain in initiative and confidence by working in the department or on the school council with younger students. Good use is made of film and video. The range of learning activities offered is extended by the opportunity to do the IB. On this course standards are above average. Leadership is exemplary in raising the level of critical thinking and independent study but this is not yet consistent throughout the course.

127. The leadership is very good because it provides a very good model for teachers to use to create opportunities for students to learn and develop. All the teaching team has the opportunity to develop too by having the chance to teach the students but the management though satisfactory, is not effective yet. Staff training programmes focus on teaching and learning strategies but implementing these is hindered either by small numbers in some groups or by lack of specialist knowledge. Independent study in literature is not as effective as it would be because of the lack of attractive new critical appreciation books in the library. The improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

## **French**

Provision in French is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths**

- The teaching and learning are excellent and result in students making excellent progress
- Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent
- Relationships are excellent
- Standards of listening, speaking and reading are above average

### **Commentary**

128. Results in 2003 at A level were at the national average and a fifth of students gained A or B grades. In the AS examination in 2003, four fifths of students passed, but mostly with grades C to E. This represents good achievement, however, because of the wide range of ability of students.

129. Year 12 students have good listening skills and can understand lessons conducted entirely in French at normal speed. Some are able to talk confidently on a number of topics including aspects of grammar. Their reading comprehension skills are above average and they understand the gist and pick out key points and details from written texts. Students' written work is average, but some students make very basic errors in spelling and in verb endings. Year 13 students have very good listening skills and their speaking skills are very well developed. Their ability to engage in discussion and debate is very impressive. They have a very good knowledge of general and specialist vocabulary relating to the A level topics and a good command of grammatical structures. Their course work shows very good progression from Year 12 to Year 13. Current standards are above average.

130. The teaching of French in the sixth form is excellent. Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent, the marking of students' work is very good and teachers set clear targets to help students improve. Lessons are very well prepared and are completely in French, which greatly improves students' listening skills. Students use ICT to research topics and some students word process essays. Lessons are very varied and teachers use a wide variety of imaginative activities and approaches, which ensure that students work at full speed for the whole time. Lessons are very challenging and are conducted at a 'sizzling' pace, which motivates students, who work conscientiously and with enjoyment. Relationships are excellent and teachers praise students for their efforts and correct their mistakes very skilfully, which creates for learning. The leadership and management of the subject are very good and the subject has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

## Spanish

Provision in Spanish is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge
- Achievement is very good as a result of very good teaching
- Standards of listening, speaking and reading are above average
- In 2003 all students passed A Level, but with few higher grades

### Commentary

131. Results at A level in 2003 were at the national average. All students passed, but none gained A or B grades. In the AS examination in 2003 just over two thirds of students passed, but mostly with grades C to E. This represents satisfactory achievement. Current standards are above average Year 12 students understand lessons conducted entirely in Spanish and can pick out details from recorded texts. Some speak fluently and with confidence on syllabus topics such as issues relating to drug abuse. Students' pronunciation and intonation are very good. Their reading is above average, but their writing is less well developed. Year 13 students also have very good listening comprehension, but the standard of spoken Spanish is variable, ranging from well above average to average. Students have a good vocabulary base and a good awareness of key grammar.

132. The teaching and learning are very good. The teacher's subject knowledge is excellent and relationships are also excellent. Students' work is marked regularly and the quality of comments and targets is very high, which helps students to make very good progress. The preparation and planning of lessons is very good and the aims of lessons are always made explicit. Very good use is made of ICT to present and practise language very effectively and students are also encouraged to do research on the Internet. Lessons are very lively and good use is made of humour, which encourages students to be fully involved in all aspects of lessons. Authentic materials bring topics alive and students are motivated to achieve very well. Lessons have a brisk pace and activities fully stretch students in listening, speaking, reading and writing. Students are praised for their efforts and teachers correct students' mistakes very skilfully, which creates an excellent learning environment. Students' written work is very well marked and they are given very good advice on how to improve. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. Improvement since the last report has been satisfactory.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- A Level results are good
- Results at AS level have been poor recently, due to the school's open access policy
- Teaching and learning are good in Year 12 and very good in Year 13. Students achieve very well overall

### Commentary

133. A Level results are above average with almost all students gaining A or B grades in 2003. The AS pass rate has been poor in the recent past because some students have started the course with unrealistic prior attainment at GCSE. These students subsequently failed the examinations in Year 12 and did not continue with the A level course.

134. Current Year 12 students are on target to attain average results at AS level and IB students are working at the levels required to secure a pass at the level (higher or standard) at which they are entered. Achievement in Year 12 is good, because teaching is good. Year 13 A level students are doing very well. Work in pure and applied mathematics is of good quality and students are expected to secure high A level grades by the end of the year. Students build very well on their earlier successes and achievement is very good.

135. Teachers are well qualified for work at sixth form level, and staff turnover has had much less impact on learning than lower down the school. Lessons are planned well to meet the needs of the various courses taught and students are well informed about the progress they are making. Where groups are small, such as in Year 13 A level classes, teachers adopt a very effective tutorial style of teaching. A lesson on the co-ordinate geometry of circles was very good. A perceptive student comment related the work to earlier studies at GCSE, whilst others played a significant part in the discussion leading to the development of the general result that was the aim of the lesson. Students achieved very well in learning new techniques and applying them to a range of typical A level questions. In larger Year 12 AS classes, teaching is not quite so effective, but is still good overall. This is because there is a wider range of ability within the class and teaching is directed more towards the needs of students who are finding the subject hard. Although this is good for the majority, a small number of higher attaining students are held back.

136. Teaching in the IB classes is good. Lessons for students on the “standard” course on solving simultaneous equations and on the binomial distribution for those studying statistics on the “higher” course were well pitched to students’ needs. Skilled explanations develop the theory well and lessons move on swiftly, so that students have plenty of time to practise new techniques. Teachers work very well with individual students to resolve difficulties as they occur. Consequently students make good progress and achieve well. The AS pass rate has been poor in the recent past because some students have started the course with unrealistic prior attainment at GCSE. These students subsequently failed the examinations in Year 12 and dropped out of the A level course. However, the students that remain go on to do well at A Level. In 2003 nearly all gained A and B grade passes.

137. As in Years 7 to 11, the leadership and management of mathematics are satisfactory, particularly in the light of staffing difficulties in this as in other areas. Improvement since the last inspection has also been satisfactory.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

138. Students make satisfactory use of mathematics in other subjects. For example, use of equations and graphing techniques support learning in science, and students use a range of data analysis and presentation skills in a range of subjects, for example to explain demographic trends in geography.

## **SCIENCE**

The focus was on chemistry but physics and biology were also sampled. Two physics lessons were sampled as part of the IB course and one Year 13 at A Level. In both lessons the students were taught by enthusiastic and knowledgeable specialists. As a result of the skilled teaching, which incorporated effective use of ICT, students were making good progress. They analysed data well and were confident in their ability to apply knowledge to new situations. Overall, students showed good achievement. In biology, two lessons were seen and both were very good. The Year 12 IB students were looking at the adaptations of animals to oxygen uptake at high altitude and underwater; whilst the Year 13 students were developing their synoptic skills whilst presenting data, they had collected from an experiment, in a variety of forms. Students are very positive about the courses and appreciate the support they receive. Standards over recent years have been variable but students usually achieve in line with or above that predicted by their previous work and the current students are working at a level that is above average.

## Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers are experienced and have very good subject knowledge
- Teachers and students share very good relationships
- Teachers provide very good support to students in Year 13
- Some students under-achieve in Year 12
- The lessons and sequence of lessons are well planned
- Some students in Year 12 lack independent learning skills
- Individual students' progress in Year 12 is not monitored effectively enough

### Commentary

139. In 2002, the results were well below the national average at both AS and A level. *No results included in the tables*. The standards seen both in lessons and in students' folders demonstrate that the standards have improved and are now close to the national level. However, the standards seen in Year 12 range widely, from grade A to E.

140. Overall the achievement of students in chemistry is now satisfactory and has improved from the situation in 2002. Students enter the sixth form close to the national level. The achievement of AS and IB students is wide ranging but is satisfactory, overall. The achievement of the A level students is good. This difference in the achievement of students is due to the variation in attitude of the students when working outside the classroom.

141. The teaching and learning are good. The two specialist teachers have very good subject knowledge and are experienced in the requirements for examinations. The enthusiastic teachers share very good relationships with their students, especially in Year 13. The students greatly appreciate the quality of teaching they experience and the support they receive both in and out of lessons. The students have many opportunities to perform practical investigations and these are performed well by the students in a careful and cooperative manner. This careful approach was seen with a combined group of AS and IB students looking at the chemical reaction of unsaturated organic compounds.

142. The teachers are skilled at handling effective question and answer sessions that enabled them to gauge the students' understanding of the topics covered. The most effective learning occurred in the Year 13 class due to the involvement and motivation of the students and their good attitude to the subject. The larger group of AS and IB students made this type of monitoring of learning more difficult. The department will need to ensure that all these students make progress. Currently their achievement of these students is not monitored closely enough. This has been recognised and further strategies to improve achievement at AS level are planned.

143. The leadership and management of the department are good though relatively new. The department has recently re-organised the delivery of chemistry in both Years 12 and 13 that allows good progression through the course. There is good provision made for the coursework aspects of the course within this planning.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers have good specialist knowledge
- The students have a positive attitude towards the subject
- The good relationships between teachers and students support learning
- The students relate their use of ICT to real life situations
- Students are reluctant to engage in whole class discussion
- Assessments grades are not readily available to the students

### **Commentary**

144. The results of the 2002 advanced vocational certificate of education (AVCE) examinations were in line with national expectations. The standard of work seen in lessons was above national expectations. Students are very positive about their ICT work. They can be found during break and lunch times using the computers and extending their projects. Students speak confidently about their work and use technical language accurately and appropriately.

145. Discussion with students and an examination of their work shows that they are at the expected level at this point in the academic year. They are confident users of the communication element and have sound knowledge of spreadsheets, using them with confidence and understanding. Students are able to discuss the use of ICT in its wider context and many are developing software to be used in commercial or educational settings. One student is writing software to be used as a training package by the school librarian. Others are designing packages to be used to deliver aspects of ICT to students in Years 7 to 11.

146. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use their expertise to guide students through complicated procedures. In the lessons observed, sessions started with a clear introduction resulting in students quickly settling to work. The use of the computer-controlled white board allowed whole-class involvement in the task. The good use of questioning also ensured that many students participated fully in the lessons. Although students are willing to answer direct questions they are reluctant to engage in group discussion. This means that student ideas are rarely shared with others in the group and their thoughts are not being fully developed. The relationships between teachers and students are good. They enhance the learning process and leave students willing to seek help when it is needed.

147. Teachers assess the work of the students with accuracy and relate the grades given to those achievable in the final examinations. These grades are stored on a computer, but the assessment records are not readily available to the students, which prevents them from seeing an overall picture of their development.

148. The management and leadership of the subject are good. The ICT provision is reviewed and refined regularly to raise standards. Those teachers delivering ICT at post-16 work closely and are mutually supportive. Since, in the last inspection, post-16 courses were not reported on separately it is not possible to judge progress since that time.

### **ICT across the curriculum**

149. Most subject areas consider the use of ICT to be integral to the teaching and learning processes. A good example was seen in geography where students in Year 12 researched the floods in Bangladesh using the internet. Students not taking ICT as a separate subject say that their ICT experience in Years 7 to 11 prepares them fully for its use in the subjects that they are now studying. The use of ICT across the sixth form curriculum is very good.

## HUMANITIES

The school offers a range of courses in geography, history, philosophy, government and politics at A Level and through the IB. The main subjects for inspection were A Level geography and IB history, but work was sampled in other subjects. An outstanding Year 13 A level history lesson on whether there was a “mid Tudor crisis”, was characterised by excellent subject expertise, stimulating delivery and challenging questioning. The lesson included a wide range of well-timed activities in which lively group discussion figured prominently. Students responded with high levels of interest and motivation to this challenging and rigorous enquiry and levels of achievement were of a very high standard. In a Year 12 government and politics lesson, students effectively extended their understanding of the usefulness of the roles played by prime minister’s question time, parliamentary debate and select committees. Teaching of a good standard was characterised by excellent specialist knowledge and informative whole-class delivery that promoted good levels of interest and achievement.

### History (IB)

The provision in history is **very good**.

#### Main strengths

- The high standards of attainment at IB higher and standard level
- The very good quality of teaching, which is based on excellent subject expertise and highly effective planning
- The exemplary levels of departmental organisation that underpin achievement
- The very good quality of resources that are used to promote learning

#### Commentary

150. In 2003, results at IB were well above the international average at higher level. At standard level the results were above the international average. In 2002, results were also well above the international average at higher level. There were no candidates at standard level.

151. In the work seen standards are above international expectations. Students entering the course with no less than a grade B at GCSE achieve well in terms of their prior attainment. Encouraged by their teachers, students learn to think creatively and to consider different analytical approaches and historical interpretations. Written work demonstrates the growing ability of all students to challenge the assumptions implied in a question, and to select and use knowledge relevantly and effectively. Evaluating evidence critically, students can produce convincing arguments and reach coherent conclusions. Although sometimes reluctant to express their views in class discussion, all students are acquiring the confidence required to reach sound historical judgments independently. Students collaborate well, and work purposefully when tackling independent research and enquiry.

152. Teaching on this course is never less than very good, and can be outstanding. Lessons are exceptionally well planned and structured. Teachers’ excellent subject expertise allows them to confront students energetically and rigorously with issues surrounding evidence. Using skilful questioning techniques, teachers heighten the appreciation of different factors in historical causation. Lessons are designed to extend historical enquiry and to develop conceptual understanding. Teachers demonstrate very good understanding of the way students learn, which is reflected in the quality and range of course materials they produce. Excellent use is made of visual evidence to stimulate interest and heighten awareness. Very good levels of learning are enhanced by the proficient and imaginative use of ICT.

153. The department is very well led and managed at sixth form level. Exemplary levels of organisation support the work of a hard working and very professional team. Teachers collaborate well and share high expectations. Their commitment is mirrored in the regular assessment of written work. Diagnostic feedback provides students with very clear indicators for the improvement of their

work, and is closely related to IB mark schemes. Reporting and review procedures are well defined. Students have access to a good range of resources, including ICT. It is clear from discussions with students that they recognise that they are being very well taught and find their lessons intellectually challenging. For the future, there is scope to assist students in making meaningful historical exchanges by introducing them to external speakers and by opening contact with other IB schools.

## **Geography**

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers' subject knowledge is good
- Teaching is often challenging and interesting
- The introduction of the IB course has been a success, but there are weaknesses in other aspects of the management of the subject
- Students did not achieve as well in geography as they did in their other subjects

### **Commentary**

154. Results in 2002 at AS level were above average for overall passes, but below at higher grades. This was significantly lower than students' performance in their other subjects, particularly for girls. In 2003, both overall and higher-grade passes were down, and were below both national and school averages. A level passes in 2002 were just above the national level overall, but girls' passes were well below at higher grades. Boys surpassed boys' national performance, but performed significantly less well than in their other subjects. In 2003 this improved and A to C passes were better than the school average. In the 2003 international baccalaureate (IB) students all gained level five, with most at the top two levels; these compared well to other subjects.

155. Work seen in Years 12 and 13 is at about the national average, and broadly reflects the abilities of those currently taking geography. Students are making good progress and most feel well supported. IB students are the most positive, but students on all courses are achieving well in lessons.

156. Teaching and learning are good, because individual teachers have good subject knowledge, plan well and cover the courses in good detail. Two teachers share teaching in all courses and students value the way their work complements each other. Students are interested, and most are enthusiastic about the subject and its teaching, feeling that motivated students can do well. Students are strong on using geographical terms and understand key ideas well. They can form opinions and defend them well orally, and written work is well structured and shows good research skills. When given the opportunity, they work well independently, but sometimes lessons are too teacher directed for this. Most understand how to improve their standard, because they have the examination criteria and use these independently.

157. Leadership is satisfactory but management is unsatisfactory. Individual teachers have good understanding of teaching methods, work coherently and resources used are good. They set high standards of expectation and student tasks are well managed and marked constructively. Teachers have good knowledge of individual students' needs and support them well. However, a weakness in management is that, although teaching is generally good, there have been wide variations in students' performance in examinations, without a full understanding of why this occurred. Assessment and exam data are used well to help individual students to improve, but less well to improve the overall consistency of results by adapting teaching and management methods. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall. Despite fluctuating standards in AS and A levels, the IB course has been well introduced and is serving able students well.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

This area was not a focus for inspection but work in product design in textiles and resistant materials was sampled. In textiles, the students were independently engaged in a range of manufacturing activities using industrial principles and designing techniques. This led to students making good progress in producing good quality practical work. In a theory lesson, students were less successful, in making a presentation on fashion trends of the 1970's. However, many students have been inspired by this course to follow further study in this subject in higher education. In resistant materials, students have not made sufficient progress since the start of the course and the standards of folder-work are below average. Some students have linked their designing to a real situation that has helped motivation and provided feedback from a client. Some of these design briefs are ambitious, but are not fully meeting the requirements of a resistant materials technology examination as they are of a more graphical design nature. In both courses students are not sufficiently well informed of the examination requirements.

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

### **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students are inspired by teachers' expertise, enthusiasm and love of the subject
- Students' work shows high levels of creativity
- The very good teaching leads to students' very good achievement
- The constructive assessment strategies help students to manage their time and become independent learners
- Standards of critical debate and discussion are not as highly developed as other skills

### **Commentary**

158. The school's analysis of results in 2003 shows students' average point score to be above the average. A significant number of students joined the course with above average qualifications and experience in art and design but average attainment in other subjects. From their various starting points they achieved very well. In recent years a very small number of students have studied for the IB examinations and attained high standards.

159. In the work seen there are clear signs of improving standards. The work of current Year 13 students is above the average and in Year 12 standards are much higher. The preparatory work by the highest attaining students shows maturity, imagination and creativity and leads to very high quality work. Since the last inspection, great improvements have been made in the use of computer software to manipulate images. Further progress is possible in the future, as the range of software is extended and as students enter the sixth form with more experience and a greater understanding of how the creative potential of computers can be exploited. A weaker aspect of this otherwise very positive picture is that some students do not speak as confidently and authoritatively about art, artists and designers' work as they write about it. They would benefit from being given more challenging opportunities to practise these skills. Overall, however, students achieve very well indeed.

160. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers' command of the subject and their excellent course planning, communication and presentational skills inspire and motivate. Students understand the course requirements and know what they can do to improve their work because they receive constructive assessments and excellent feedback on their progress. Teachers' expectations and enthusiasm for learning make them excellent role models. As a result, students work very hard and their independent study skills are very well developed. Each year, many continue their studies in the arts in higher education and are well prepared for the courses they select. Visits to local and national galleries give the curriculum added breadth and trips to Europe give an international perspective that supports the school's specialist language status. These and other enrichment opportunities are integrated very skilfully into the course.

161. Leadership and management are very good. The course planning and analysis of examination results are excellent and lead to very effective action. The popularity of the course is placing an increasing strain on existing resources and accommodation. Students do not have access to a designated work-space and for some this limits the scale and style of work they undertake. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. The numbers of students opting for the advanced course has risen and standards have improved.

### **Media studies**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Current Year 12 and 13 groups are achieving above average standards
- Teachers have good knowledge and expertise and teaching is good very good in the text
- Leadership and management of media studies are good
- Teachers know their students' needs well, but do not always give them enough guidance in marking to help them improve

### **Commentary**

162. The GCE A level examination results in 2003 were average. Most students who took the examination achieved a pass grade, but the number achieving the highest grades was below expectations. Given the starting point of the students this represented satisfactory achievement. Results at AS level were well above average representing very good achievement. In 2002, results were above average and achievement was good. Media studies is a popular choice amongst students and retention rates are high. Boys and girls achieve equally well.

163. The standards of work of current students are above average and their achievement is good. Students participate fully in lessons and can use media terminology confidently and precisely. They are accurate and perceptive readers of a wide range of media and are able to argue and justify their viewpoints with reference to a similarly wide range of historical and contemporary sources. Written coursework is of high quality including some imaginative and challenging assignments such as applying Adorno and Horkheim's theories to soap operas and examining postmodernism and intertextuality in the opening of *L.A. Confidential*. Higher-attaining students produce sophisticated and polished work showing the ability to compare and contrast across different forms of media and to research topics very effectively. The personal organisation of some students, usually boys, is poor; the work of lower-attaining students is marred by spelling and grammatical errors.

164. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have strong expertise in the subject and their very good knowledge and understanding is communicated effectively to students. Students respond well to the way the subject is taught. They concentrate well in class and are eager to participate in discussions. Teachers cater effectively for the different interests of students, both in the choice of unit options and in the range of activities within lessons. Students' needs are well understood and planning is detailed and appropriate. A very good range of ICT and audio-visual resources are incorporated well into lessons and provides an appropriate level of challenge. On occasions, teaching can be over-directive with not all students having an equal opportunity to participate.

165. The leadership and management are good with a clear direction for the subject and the curriculum has been well structured. A wide range of very good resources to support learning has been produced and schemes of work are thoughtful and stimulating. The department is well organised and effective with a distinctive team ethos. Formal monitoring is underdeveloped. Students have few opportunities to set targets and review their progress towards these. Variations in marking between different teachers means students are not always clear about how to improve their work.

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

This area was not a focus for inspection but work in physical education and leisure and tourism was sampled. The leisure and tourism GNVQ is a popular and very well taught course in which all students feel very well supported and make good progress. Standards are good and students are achieving well.

## **BUSINESS**

This area was not a focus for inspection but work in business studies and economics was sampled. In the lessons seen, the teaching was good and students were able to develop their knowledge and understanding well through both theoretical and practical activities.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

The IB theory of knowledge programme was sampled. A very good understanding on the part of the teacher of the IB objectives and an original approach to teaching ensure that lessons stimulate student interest. Excellent resources produced by the teacher support very good learning.

### **Critical thinking**

Provision in critical thinking is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching is very good
- The course provides an unusual and valuable enrichment to the curriculum in the sixth form
- The scheme of work appropriately develops the key skills of 'communication' and 'improving own learning and performance'
- A barrier to further achievement is the negative attitude of a significant minority of students

### **Commentary**

166. At the beginning of this academic year, the school decided to offer all students in Year 12 a critical thinking course leading to an AS level qualification over a period of two years, an unusual but innovative decision. As yet, there are no examination results to confirm the success of the course, but evidence from observation of lessons and scrutiny of the work covered so far indicates that students are reaching standards which are in line with the expectations of this course, and some are attaining standards which are above average. At this early stage, most students are already able to use successfully the language associated with evaluating arguments, and discussing the relevance and validity of evidence.

167. The achievement of students is good. All students have a good basic understanding of the principles of critical thinking, although they are more skilled at analysing ideas from what they read through discussion and oral expression than in writing. When given an argument to analyse, students are adept at identifying conclusions, and recognising and evaluating assumptions and flaws in the evidence leading to those conclusions. However, a significant minority of students have a negative attitude towards this subject because they fail to see its value and relevance to their chosen subjects and its impact on their future education and career choices. The majority of students speak positively of the enjoyment and interest that they gain from their studies but the negativity of others can hold them back in their progress.

168. Students' good achievement arises from teaching which is very good. Teachers' very good subject knowledge and awareness of what students need to do to succeed leads to very good learning. Students understand theory, apply it to texts or situations, and are stimulated by each other's ideas. In one lesson, students quickly settled to assessing the relevance and validity of the evidence concerning a fictitious student's permanent exclusion from a college. Students worked in pairs, analysing the evidence, deciding from whom they could gain corroboration of the facts without further bias, and what conclusions could be drawn.

169. Lessons are well organised with a variety of tightly-timed tasks, and most students learn to work with focus. However, this sometimes means that not enough time is allowed for issues to be explored fully enough and for students to develop their independent learning skills to a higher level before further teacher intervention. Written tasks, including homework, are marked well with helpful comments intended to develop students' understanding and skills. Students feel well supported and guided by staff, and know what they need to do to improve.

170. Critical thinking is a demanding course which has no GCSE equivalent. It requires a whole new set of principles, approaches and terminology from students if the examination requirements are to be met successfully. The present arrangements for the course are managed and organised well.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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