

INSPECTION REPORT

BOURNE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Bourne

LEA area: Lincolnshire

Unique reference number: 120661

Headteacher: Dr Stuart Miles

Lead inspector: W Keast

Dates of inspection: 23rd to 27th February 2004

Inspection number: 259291

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar (selective)
School category:	Voluntary controlled
Age range of students:	11 - 18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	952

School address:	South Road Bourne Lincolnshire
Postcode:	PE10 9JE

Telephone number:	01778 422288
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr M W P Fisher

Date of previous inspection:	23 rd February 1998
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CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Bourne Grammar School has 952 boys and girls on roll, aged from 11 to 18 years. There are 256 students in the sixth form, a few students having joined the school at this level. The school is similar in size to other secondary schools but the sixth form is larger than average. A small proportion of students (approximately 4 per cent) is from ethnic minority backgrounds but none of these is at an early stage of learning English. A well below average proportion of students is entitled to a free school meal and the proportion of students with special educational needs is also well below average. These students' needs relate, mainly, to physical or medical problems and no student has a statement of need. The student population is stable with a below average proportion joining or leaving the school part way through a school year. Students come to the school from a wide area with broadly average social and economic characteristics. Their attainment when they come to the school is very high. In 2002, the school received an award in recognition of the achievement of its students. The school is in the middle of a building programme, which will replace a large number of demountable classrooms.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1522	W Keast	Lead inspector	
9053	V Phillips	Lay inspector	
32403	K Nicholson	Team inspector	English; sixth form English
25778	A Hicks	Team inspector	Mathematics; sixth form computing
3242	M Newman	Team inspector	Science; sixth form biology
25377	L Brown	Team inspector	Art
32590	R Fenwick	Team inspector	Design and technology; information and communication technology; sixth form resistant materials
31218	T Allen	Team inspector	Geography
27226	R Cribb	Team inspector	History; sixth form history
150785	B Stephens	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages; Sixth form French English as an additional language
30814	E Coley	Team inspector	Music
30800	B Colley	Team inspector	Physical education
1517	D Griffith	Team inspector	Religious education
2652	R Lomas	Team inspector	Special educational needs; sixth form psychology
32777	J McVeigh	Team inspector	Citizenship; sixth form chemistry and physics
33129	M Wilson	Team inspector	Sixth form mathematics
32231	A Lyons	Team inspector	Sixth form business education

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Bourne Grammar School is a very effective school providing very good value for money. Students come to the school with very high attainment and these standards are maintained while at the school. They achieve well because they are taught well and they work hard. The school is led very well with an emphasis on developing the whole individual. The school has an excellent ethos.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- Very high results at all stages
- Good achievement throughout the school
- Excellent student attitudes and an impressive development of students' personal qualities
- Good teaching, curriculum, support and guidance providing a good quality of education
- Very good leadership and good management and governance
- Some problems with easy access to computers by all subjects

The school has made good progress since the last inspection with very good progress in the sixth form. Nearly all the previous key issues have been successfully resolved with particular improvement in sixth form students' support and guidance. The provision of a daily act of collective worship remains unresolved and, despite significant improvement, the number of computers does not yet meet the needs of the school.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Overall, students achieve well throughout the school. The grade A* in the above table means that the school was in the top five per cent. The attainment of students when they come to the school is very high, in the top five percent of schools nationally, and these standards are maintained. The results in the end of Year 9 national tests in 2003 were very high nationally and were average for similar schools. Results in English, mathematics and science were all at similar levels. Current standards in Year 9 are above average overall, and well above average in the three core subjects.

All students who took GCSE examinations at the school gained five or more passes at grades A* to C. Over the last five years, results have been rising in line with the national trend. Current standards in Year 11 are well above average and are particularly high in mathematics and history. Overall, boys and girls achieved equally well at A-level. Results were very high in business studies, English literature, design and technology, geography and history. They were below average, for a small group of students, in religious studies. Current standards in the subjects that were a focus of the inspection are above average. They are particularly high in history and well above average in psychology.

Students' personal qualities are developed impressively within the ethos of the school and as a result of first-rate provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Their excellent attitudes, behaviour and attendance contribute significantly to their achievement.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good in the main school and is very good in the sixth form.

Teaching is good in the main school and very good in the sixth form. Teachers use their very good knowledge and understanding to plan teaching which prepares students very well for examination success. Students learn well from clear explanation and good questioning, rising to the challenge of high expectations, working hard and concentrating well. Very good relationships foster an effective learning environment, particularly in the sixth form. On occasion, over-reliance on the teacher limits the range of strategies used in Years 7 to 9 and misses opportunities to develop independent learning skills in the sixth form. The curriculum meets their needs and aspirations well and very well in the sixth form. Additional learning opportunities enhance the curriculum very well. Despite improvement, the provision of computers struggles to meet needs and teaching provision for ICT in Years 8 and 9 is inadequate. Students are very well supported and guided throughout the school. Good links with parents, the community and other schools support students' achievement well.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, the leadership and management of the school are very good. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the school and his leadership and that of his senior managers is very good. They have developed a very effective team and ensured that the staff share the headteacher's vision and direction. Governance of the school is good and governors are effective in their role although they have not ensured that the school meets all the detail of its statutory requirements. The school is well managed. Overall, departmental leadership is very good and management is good. Departmental planning links well with whole-school planning and good professional development supports individual and whole-school needs well.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very pleased with the education the school offers their children. In their view, students are expected to work hard and they make good progress. They are happy that arrangements for new students to settle in are good. They believe that the school is well led and managed. The inspection team agrees with their positive judgements. They have no significant concerns about the school, but a slight reservation about the extent to which the school consults them about proposed changes or checks that they are satisfied with its work. Inspectors agree that consultation could be better.

Students in the main school are very pleased with most elements of school life and agree that this a good school to attend. They acknowledge that they are expected to work hard and do their best, that they are taught well and that the school is well run. Discussions confirmed that they have someone to talk to and feel that they are trusted and treated with respect. They explained that isolated instances of misbehaviour and name-calling had influenced the way they responded to questionnaire items about behaviour and bullying, but that in reality, standards of behaviour are very high and bullying extremely rare. They had one or two reservations about fair treatment by staff in particular classes, although for the most part, they feel very well treated and supported. Their views are taken seriously within the school council, but students feel that the school has scope for wider consultation. Inspectors agree.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The school is honest and accurate in its self-evaluation and has planned development action appropriately. The school should continue to implement its planned developments and within these seek to

- Rigorously monitor classroom practice so as to widen further teaching strategies in Years 7 to 9 and ensure that marking provides younger students with subject specific guidance on how to improve their work
- Increase the availability and use of ICT across the curriculum
- Consult more formally with sixth form students and parents to ascertain and respond to their views

and, to meet statutory requirements

- A daily act of collective worship for all students and sufficient time for religious education in the sixth form to meet the expectations of the Agreed Syllabus

THE SIXTH FORM AT BOURNE GRAMMAR SCHOOL

A large sixth form, joined by most students from the main school and a few students from other local schools, which offers a wide range of academic GCE courses

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very effective sixth form, which meets the needs and aspirations of its students very well with a very appropriate range of academic courses. It is very cost effective. Students achieve well as a result of their own determination to succeed and very good teaching. Examination results are very high and have been for the past three years. The sixth form is led very well and managed effectively.

The main strengths are

- Standards that are consistently very high
- Good achievement resulting from very good teaching and students' excellent attitudes
- Students' maturity and ability to use initiative with their learning when given the chance
- Very good personal and academic support for students
- Very good leadership focused on further improvement, including provision of better opportunities for enriching the curriculum and widening students' experiences

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Good in English language with strengths where high quality teaching inspires students to think critically. Satisfactory in French where teaching is not always successful in developing students' independence and range of language skills.
Mathematics	Good in mathematics .
Science	Good in biology , chemistry and physics and very good in psychology where very good teaching demands very high levels of independence and critical analysis.
Information and communication technology	Good in computing . Teachers' excellent technical skills ensure that students learn difficult concepts well.
Humanities	Very good in history where very good teaching fosters high quality intellectual debate.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Satisfactory in resistant materials .
Visual and performing arts and media	There was no focus subject in this area.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	There was no focus subject in this area.
Business	Very good in business education . Most students achieve very well because they are taught very well and relationships are very good.
General education	There was no focus subject in this area.

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

Provision is very good. The tutorial system supports students very well. Most of them feel that their progress is very well monitored on a regular basis, not only by their subject teachers and tutors, but also by senior staff. As a result, individual support and guidance is usually very good and focused helpfully on ensuring that each student does as well as possible. Where tutoring is particularly good, it is also linked with good, purposeful use of tutorial time. Guidance on university application is very thorough. Students who join the school in the sixth form say that they are able to fit in well as a result of positive support from tutors and subject teachers.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership in the sixth form is very good because it focuses sharply on encouraging students to aim high and enabling them to do as well as they can by providing very good support to complement the very good teaching they receive. The development of an effective tutorial system in the sixth form has been a very high priority for the school since the last inspection. Rapid improvement in the care and advice offered to students has resulted from decisive leadership to ensure that the role of sixth form tutor changed from one that involved calling the register to active involvement in how well students do. As a result of better support, the sixth form is “now seen as *‘the place’* to do A-levels”. Good management has helped tutors to see that they have a crucial role to play in aiding students’ personal development and raising achievement. The sixth form as a whole is **managed well** as a result of careful review of results and other performance data by governors and senior management.

STUDENTS’ VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students’ views of the school and sixth form are very positive. “Sixth formers are cult figures in the school and positive role models, so younger students aspire to be sixth formers”. This is because not only do sixth formers enjoy their studies and get on well together, but they also work actively with younger students, particularly to help Year 7 settle in, which helps them to feel involved and valued. They believe that teaching is very good and based on strong subject expertise, as well as assistance to become independent with research and study. Teachers are available, approachable and happy to go the extra mile to help, which students appreciate. Students feel that courses match their abilities and career plans very well, although a few feel that individual guidance on what to do in the sixth form could have been improved to avoid closing doors on university courses with specific A-level subject requirements. In one or two cases the jump from GCSE to A/S courses was much greater than students had been led to expect. Discussions confirmed that the help available to sixth form students with their current courses and future plans is generally very good. The inspection team agrees with students that although the range of clubs and other activities outside lessons is good, the range of opportunities to broaden their horizons is not as rich as possible. It also agrees that the school could do more to seek and respond to students’ views actively.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Results in national examinations in 2003 were very high, in the top five per cent of schools. Standards, overall, in Year 9 are above average and in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science they are well above average. Students are achieving **well**. Standards in Year 11 are well above average and students continue to achieve well. Students with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented also achieve well.

Main strengths

- Examination results are very high and are above those of similar schools
- High standards of attainment on entry are maintained throughout the school
- All students achieve well because of the quality of education they experience and their own hard work

Commentary

1. Results in the end of Year 9 national examinations have been very high for the last four years. In 2003, results were at the same high level in each of the three core subjects of English, mathematics and science. In comparison with similar schools, that is those schools whose students gained similar results at the end of Year 6, results are average. Boys performed slightly better than girls. The trend in results over the last five years is below the national trend because the school is maintaining its very high results whereas the national results are slowly rising. The progress that students made from Year 6 to Year 9, the value added measure, was very high when compared with all schools and average for similar schools.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	40.5 (42.8)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	46.1 (46.5)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	42.4 (42.2)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 141 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

2. The standards seen in Year 9 were above average, overall, and well above average in the core subjects. They were very high in mathematics and history, and well above average in English, science, German, geography and music. While these standards appear to be lower than previous examinations indicate, it should be remembered that schools focus on examination technique and practise in the run up to examination. All students are achieving well as they maintain the high standards they had on entry to the school or improve slightly lower standards in aspects of some subjects. Their achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactory, partly because students currently have only a limited opportunity to study the subject.

3. In 2003, the proportion of students reaching the various benchmarks in the following table were very high, in the top five per cent of schools nationally or, in the case of those gaining at least one pass, well above average. In comparison with similar schools, the school was well above, above and average, respectively. However, these figures are based upon the number of students on the school roll at an earlier stage in the year, not upon the number of students at the school who were able to take the examinations. All students who were able to take the examination gained five or more grades A* to C and this 100 per cent figure puts the school in the top five per cent for any of the comparisons. Students' average total point score for their best eight subjects was very high in national comparisons and average for similar schools. Boys performed slightly better than girls. The trend in results over the last five years is similar to the national trend: slightly upward. The value-added measure from Year 9 to Year 11 was well below average when compared to all schools.

Similar school data for this measure is not available. However, the school is involved in a pilot study looking at the value added from Year 6 to Year 11 measure. The school is above average for the schools involved in this project.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	99 (98)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	99 (99)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	51.0 (51.7)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 137 pupils in the Year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. The current standards in Year 11 are well above average and are particularly high in mathematics and history. Standards are at least above average in all subjects. All students continue to achieve well in Years 10 and 11 and, in some subjects, very well.

5. Students achieve so well as a result of the teaching they receive, their own attitudes to learning and the learning ethos within the school. Students with special educational needs make good progress in the subjects of the curriculum and towards the targets set for them in individual education plans.

Sixth form

Results in the sixth form have been **very high**, in the top five per cent of schools, for the last three years. Standards in the subjects which were a focus for the inspection were above average and students are achieving well.

Main strengths

- Results which maintain the high standards achieved by the school
- Standards which reflect the earlier attainment of students
- Students are achieving well, and in some subjects very well, as a result of the quality of education they experience and their own hard work

Commentary

6. Overall, results in 2003 were very high in comparison with national results. The following table shows, even with a small decline in the average point score, how far above national averages the school's results are. Overall, there was no difference between the performance of boys and girls. There were differences, subject by subject, most notably the higher performance of boys in mathematics. Information from a nationally recognised and moderated analysis indicates that students in 2003 reached standards that were generally as predicted by their earlier Year 11 results. In addition to the focus subjects, detailed in part C of this report, results in geography, food technology and textiles were notably high.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	94.6 (98.5)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	46.7 (58.3)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per pupil	408.0 (422.6)	258.2 (263.3)

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

7. The sixth form is quite deliberately focused on GCE examinations and, therefore, the attainment on entry to the sixth form is above average for sixth forms nationally. The subjects, agreed with the school, which were the focus of the inspection in the sixth form represented a cross-section of those being taught and were not simply the strongest. Generally, the standards seen were above average. Standards were high in history, well above average in psychology and average for the small group studying design products: resistant materials. Where student numbers are small, standards are very dependent upon the individual students on the course and comparison with national norms is unhelpful. In these focus subjects students were achieving well and in some subjects, very well. As in the main school, this is as a result of the teaching they experience together with their own impressive attitudes to learning and the commitment they make to their work.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attendance is **excellent**, as are their attitudes and behaviour, which contribute significantly to their achievement. Their personal qualities are developed impressively within the ethos of the school and as a result of first-rate provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Main strengths

- Students value the opportunities they have for success, so try to make the most of them even on the occasions when teaching was dull
- Behaviour is outstanding and contributes strongly to a highly civilised atmosphere where people work together purposefully
- Students show great maturity in response to the school's very high expectations of personal responsibility and independence
- Students want to be here to do as well as they can, so their attendance is excellent
- The school's ethos and emphasis on high standards, including first-rate moral and social awareness, foster personal qualities impressively

Commentary

8. Students know exactly what the school expects, partly because of the impressive 'bridging project' and induction processes that settle them into the school so well. So, even the youngest students anticipate and accept that they will have to take work seriously. As a result, even when teaching is uninspiring, students of all ages and abilities persevere. Their willingness to keep going often compensates admirably for activities that may not be closely matched to different students' rates of learning. In the best lessons, their interest and involvement are exceptional. In a Year 9 session about decision-making for career choice, students listened intently to a stimulating introduction before engaging in high-calibre presentations based on this and their own independent research. They expressed remarkable empathy with the role of a veterinary surgeon and imaginative pictures of themselves twenty years on.

9. Students are extremely courteous and helpful, while retaining 'normal' adolescent vitality, which shines through in better lessons and around the school, for instance when they are out at break. They think of others when moving round the site so that in very tight corners and narrow corridors, people do not barge through, but wait their turn. Lunchtime is extremely civilised, in spite of the lack of space for all to queue and eat together readily. Classrooms are places where students focus on learning, listen with care, follow instructions and do as they are asked so that everyone has a chance to do well at school. Exclusions are very rare.

10. Students in all year groups respond impressively to a culture within the school of good manners, very considerate behaviour, thoughtfulness, respect for others and self-discipline. They follow the lead of sixth formers and key staff by getting on with their work with great good humour and without fuss. When given the chance, they rise to the challenge of working on their own admirably. Relationships in the school are outstanding and contribute to a friendly and very purposeful atmosphere. Students value the climate of success, the work ethic and their friendships, so they want to be in school to benefit from these.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – Irish
White – any other White background
Mixed – White and Black African
Mixed – any other mixed background
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Black or Black British – African
Chinese
Any other ethnic group
No ethnic group recorded

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
872	4	1
5		
23		
2		
14		
6		
2		
9		
1		
18		

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

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	4.3
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	1.1

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

11. The school's focus on moral and social development is more consistent and of a higher order than for students' spiritual and cultural awareness. Opportunities to inspire students with fascinating ideas and experiences are overlooked, partly because policies on promoting spiritual and cultural awareness have not been translated into practical guidance. In better lessons, teachers stimulate critical thinking and reflection skilfully and, where they can, encourage lively debate on cultural diversity. In a Year 7 science lesson, students relished the chance to think for themselves about buoyancy and were captivated by floating and sinking objects. In a Year 7 tutorial, students had the chance to speculate on the origins of an axe head and as a result of the teacher's eloquent, passionate comments, had the chance to connect wonderfully with the ancient world of a 4000 year-old object. As a whole, given the school's admirable sense of purpose, provision for personal development is excellent.

Sixth form

Students' attendance is **very good** as they respond very well to expectations that they will manage personal study time appropriately. They are usually extremely punctual to lessons, given current difficulties getting around the site, sometimes arriving before staff, when they use initiative, wherever possible, and get on with their work until the teacher arrives. Their commitment to their studies is **excellent**. They are very highly motivated to do as well as they can. Their behaviour and maturity are **outstanding**.

Main strengths

- Students are highly motivated so their excellent attitudes underpin the success they achieve
- Students rise to the challenge impressively when given the chance to think for themselves and to study independently
- Students are excellent ambassadors for the school and role models for younger students

12. As students believe that the school prepares them very well for examinations and future study, they are highly committed to the courses they have chosen as routes to fulfilling their personal ambitions. They are avid learners, usually with intense intellectual curiosity and a capacity for high-calibre debate. As a result, they are extremely willing to put in the hours of personal study required to achieve the success of which they are capable. In most cases, high-quality teaching reinforces their motivation and fosters critical thinking skills energetically, so that students want to go on working on their own for the sheer pleasure of learning. This was evident in a psychology lesson where students showed the skills and initiative expected of undergraduates in rising to the challenge of skimming, scanning and synthesising information to present a research-based proposal for dispelling classroom prejudice.

13. Sixth form students are confident and articulate when speaking to others, including visitors and the youngest students in school. Year 12 students volunteer enthusiastically to work with Year 7 students when they join the school, which the younger students appreciate greatly. Prefects and house captains discharge their duties very responsibly and maturely with a refreshing lack of self-importance. In discussion, sixth formers showed that their capacity for reasoned argument and wisdom about changes for the better in school are exceptionally well thought through, but not yet given an effective outlet.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is **good** in the main school and **very good** in the sixth form. Teaching and the opportunities for learning are good in the main school and very good in the sixth form. Students are very well supported in their learning and development throughout the school.

Teaching and learning

In the main school, students are **well** taught and they learn **well**. The teaching observed in Years 10 and 11 was a little better than that seen in Years 7 to 9. Students' work is accurately marked but students in Years 10 and 11 are clearer about what they need to do to improve their work than in the earlier Years.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A consistency in subject teaching which is generally good or very good
- Teaching strategies which effectively support students' learning and their subsequent examination success, but which can be too teacher dependent with insufficient use of ICT
- A very good learning ethos developed through very good relationships and students' desire to learn
- Marking which helps students understand how to improve their work further, although this is not yet consistent all subjects

Commentary

14. Students learn well as a result of the good teaching they experience and the effort that they put into their work. Teaching in most subjects is good or very good. Teaching in ICT is satisfactory because, although the national recommendations on content have been taken on board, they have not been sufficiently adjusted to reflect the nature of the school and the current timetable structure. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and expertise. They use these to plan lessons well with activities which interest, stimulate and challenge the students well. Their expertise enables them to provide clear explanations of new concepts and to ask probing questions which help students to clarify their own ideas and thus to develop their understanding. Teachers know what is required to succeed well in examinations and prepare their students thoroughly, thus contributing to their success.

15. The strategies that teachers use are effective in developing students' knowledge and understanding and helping them to achieve well. Nevertheless, there is a tendency in some subjects to use a limited range of strategies and for the teaching to become a little over-reliant on the teacher. Students' interest and involvement in their lessons and in their own learning is very strong and they respond very well when given the opportunity to engage in discussion, debate and collaborative working. These opportunities were generally more available for older students and are part of the reason for slightly better teaching in Years 10 and 11 and in those subjects where teaching was very good. Students use ICT, particularly for presenting their work, and teachers plan and use it in their teaching, for example in the CAD/CAM work in technology and for research on the Internet. However, ICT is not used as fully as it could be to support teaching and learning in all subjects partly because teachers find it difficult to guarantee the access to computers when they need it or, as in art, the capability of the available machines is not high enough for the requirements of the software programmes.

16. Students want to learn and very good relationships are developed in lessons. This helps create a very good learning atmosphere where students feel valued and confident to offer answers, ask questions and seek clarification. Teachers have high expectations of students' behaviour and standards, and students generally rise to the challenge well.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 123 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5 (4%)	36 (29%)	53 (43%)	28 (23%)	1 (1%)	0 (%)	0(%)

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

17. The school has focused attention on assessment of work to help students learn and achieve and this is much improved since the last inspection. Students' work is marked accurately. The school plans that, while not for every piece, students' work should regularly be marked in detail. The marking should include very clear evaluation of what the student can do and give guidance and advice on what the student could do to improve the standard and to develop their understanding. Where this has been fully implemented, students have a clear idea of how to improve and plan to do so. Some subjects still rely too much on frequent testing which, while confirming how well a student is doing, does not help them identify how to improve. This guidance is generally better in Years 10 and 11 where teachers are very familiar with examination requirements. In Years 7 to 9, teachers have not always best used the subject criteria in the National Curriculum to clarify steps for progression.

Sixth form

Very good teaching leads to very good learning. Students' work is well marked and they understand how to improve.

Main strengths

- A high proportion of excellent or very good teaching
- A wide range of teaching strategies used to prepare students well for examination success
- Students are generally well informed about their progress and how they can improve their standards

Commentary

18. Teaching in the sixth form continues to reflect the strengths in the teaching observed in the main school. The subject expertise of teachers and their knowledge and understanding of examination requirements enable them to prepare their students well for examination success. As in the main school, the quality of students' learning is also a reflection of the effort that they put into their studies and their willingness to spend time working on their own. Teachers use a wider range of strategies in the sixth form, recognising more clearly that different students learn best in different ways. At times, the earlier over-reliance on the teacher shows through in missed opportunities to

develop students' independent learning skills. For example, students could be asked to research and present a topic rather than always rely on teacher presentation. The use of ICT is more prevalent in the sixth form, both by students in developing their work and by teachers in supporting learning. Teaching in the focus subjects was generally good or very good. In resistant materials and French, teaching was satisfactory. Learning in technology was restricted, partly due to Year 13 students not being timetabled into a workshop and partly to the timing and strength of necessary business links. Learning in French was restricted partly by an over-reliance on English for communication and partly by an uncharacteristic lack of engagement by some students.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 49 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6 (12%)	16 (33%)	15 (31%)	12 (24%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

19. Students say that they generally have good knowledge of the level at which they are working. They are well guided by their teachers as to how they can improve their grades. The system of assessment in several subjects, including business education, history, geography, German and art is very good. In these subjects, students have accurate information about their progress and teachers analyse data well to plan future work. Where students are clear about what they need to do to improve their grades, they say that this helps them to achieve well.

The curriculum

The curriculum meets the needs of students **well** and offers a **very good** range of enhancements to the taught curriculum. Overall, staffing, accommodation and learning resources meet the needs of the curriculum well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum
- Regular and rigorous review of the curriculum help to meet students' changing needs
- Personal development is promoted through a well-planned programme of personal, social and health education, citizenship and the excellence of the school
- Teaching provision for ICT in Years 8 and 9 is inadequate
- Statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship are not met
- The provision of well-qualified teachers is good and weaknesses in accommodation will be remedied by the current building programme

Commentary

20. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is enhanced by all students studying both French and German. The provision for ICT in Years 8 and 9, a single period every other week, is inadequate to provide sufficient coverage or continuity in students' experience. In Years 10 and 11, students are offered a good choice of subjects, including Spanish. As a result of regular review, the time for religious education has been increased and all students now study GCSE short courses in ICT and religious education. The banding system in Year 10 has been changed, following concerns over students in the lower band, and the three separate sciences are now available to all students. Following the most recent review, changes are planned which, from September, will tackle the ICT issue. Additional subject courses will be available to students entering Year 10, further improving the choice.

21. The broadening of the learning opportunities beyond the taught curriculum are referred to as the co-curriculum, embodying the school ethos that education is about the whole individual not simply academic success. The school has a wide range of sport activities. Inter-group and house competitions are entered into with enthusiasm. The school is successful in frequent inter-school competitions. Opportunities to make and enjoy music are strong with, among others, a successful soul band, a chamber choir and string ensembles. Clubs and subject support activities are well

attended. Drama provides enrichment through the good provision of extra-curricular activities, including lunchtime and after-school clubs, to prepare for a range of school productions. Sixth form students from the successful theatre studies courses contribute positively to this provision. The school organises several performances each year, as well as a musical, with a team of students of all ages forming a permanent stage crew to provide the technical support.

22. Very good opportunities for personal development result in the maturity, excellent behaviour, politeness and confidence of the students. A well-planned PSHE (personal, social and health education) programme meets national requirements for sex and drugs awareness education and, taught in conjunction with citizenship education, contributes to personal development. The school council offers the opportunity for students to be involved in the running of the school and the year forums involve them in the social life of their year group. Visiting speakers, foreign trips and exchanges, and opportunities to enter local and national competitions as a team or an individual, all contribute very well to students' opportunities for personal development.

23. The school has a regular pattern of assemblies but as the hall is not large enough for much more than a year group, each group has one or two assemblies in each two-week timetable cycle. These assemblies meet the requirement for an act of corporate worship. The school cannot ensure that sufficient form tutors are willing to make this provision for all other tutor groups and so it does not fulfil its statutory requirement.

24. Staff are well qualified and meet the needs of the curriculum well. However, the provision of science technicians is low and the too few teachers and support staff in ICT struggle to meet the demands of the tasks. Accommodation is satisfactory and will shortly improve dramatically on completion of the current phase of building. Much of the accommodation, which was inadequate at the previous inspection, has improved significantly and current building and future plans are based on a co-ordinated approach to meet teaching and curriculum needs and to provide specialist facilities. There are still too few science laboratories. Physical education lacks suitable alternative indoor space for wet weather use. Resources are good and support learning well. Resources for ICT have improved significantly but still do not provide the ready access necessary for greater use to support subject teaching. The library provision is satisfactory and well used but small. It is to be incorporated into a much-improved learning resource centre in the current building programme.

Sixth form

The curriculum meets the needs and aspirations of the students **very well**. The same breadth of general co-curriculum opportunities is available to students in the sixth form. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A wide, well-balanced range of subjects is offered
- Sufficient well-qualified teachers, good accommodation and resources to meet the needs of the curriculum but too little access to computers to meet general study needs
- Statutory requirements for religious education are not met

Commentary

25. Students join the sixth form in the expectation that nearly all of them will move on to a university course afterwards. The school offers a wide range of GCE courses to its students and meets their needs very well. The curriculum therefore builds well on students' experience in Years 10 and 11 and prepares them well for opportunities in higher education. Courses such as business education and psychology have been added to those encountered in the main school in response to student demands. All students successfully follow a general studies course which includes aspects of religious education, but not in sufficient detail to meet the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus.

26. The curriculum is enriched and students' personal and social development is promoted through the continuing co-curriculum opportunities. Some of these are tailored more specifically to the needs and interests of sixth form students. For example, fieldwork visits support geography and

biology, a former student spoke of his work on the Blue Streak missile and on his teaching and research in other parts of the world, and the subjects of external lectures provide appropriate stimulus to students of this age. All these opportunities require the availability of students at lunchtime or after school which, with the dispersed location of students' homes, is not always easy. The school, unlike many others, has not taken the opportunity to arrange the sixth form timetable to allow afternoons in which sporting fixtures or visits can be undertaken, or visitors invited in, as part of the curriculum.

27. The sixth form staff are well qualified, but students are affected by the same comparative weakness in ICT and technical support in science. Accommodation is good and sixth-form access to a study area has improved, but this lacks access for students readily and regularly to work on computers. Resources for sixth form courses are good.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for students' care, welfare, health and safety is **good**. Students are monitored and supported **very well** as they move through the school. Students' views are sought but not always taken into account.

Main strengths

- Adults know students well and provide very effective support for their safety and security
- Induction arrangements for year 7 are excellent and help students to achieve a very good start
- Good systems for monitoring progress ensure that students receive effective individual guidance, particularly when they are choosing courses for years 10 and 11 and for the sixth form
- Students have good opportunities through the school council to contribute to the school's work and development

Commentary

28. Staff take good care of students and the quality of this care and support has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Students are assisted well to achieve all of which they are capable. Good procedures are in place to ensure the safety of all. Students appreciate the individual support readily given by staff. The tutor system is a very efficient vehicle for advice and guidance at different stages in a student's school life and is backed up by support agencies as required. The year and house systems provide good structures for care and participation in school life. For example, the inter-house competitions for sport encourage students to do their very best. Most students have a strong relationship with teachers. They talk to their form tutor or head of year and feel confident to speak to whichever member of staff they know best. Sixth form students, the Year 7 Prefects, are on hand to support younger students. Older students benefit from the guidance in subject choice and careers provided by the Connexions Service. Students who have special educational needs are well supported. Students identified as exceptionally able within at least three subject areas are taught as a group in Year 10 so that the teaching can particularly challenge them. Through this, and a developing programme of extra activities, their needs are well supported.

29. Arrangements for child protection are up-to-date and effective. Senior staff are vigilant in ensuring good supervision during breaks and lunchtimes as well as at the end of the school day. The school's health and safety practices are good. Regular checks and monitoring take place and risk assessment is very good.

30. Since the previous inspection, the induction programme for new students has developed very well. The strong pastoral link with primary schools has been significantly improved through the still-developing academic link. The bridging project, which students start in their primary school and finish in Year 7, goes a long way to overcoming the 'dip' in attainment over the summer holiday and helps teachers at the school to recognise and build on students' previous knowledge well.

31. There are well-managed arrangements for assessment and for tracking progress. Information from national examinations and regular testing is now collated and analysed well and provides information to parents and teachers. It is used effectively to identify potentially under-

achieving students. The marking system which identifies strengths and weaknesses in students' work and gives specific guidance on how to improve is most effective in Years 10 and 11. Here, students are able to identify useful and subject-specific targets for themselves. This work is now developing in Years 7 to 9, but is more variable between subjects. Individual students with special educational needs now make a notable contribution both in drawing up the targets in their individual education plans, and in reviewing the progress they make towards achieving them. Useful careers advice with well-organised work experience in Year 10, helps students to make appropriate decisions. The school council and separate year forums discuss matters which are of interest to students and provide a way for them to express their views.

Sixth form

The school provides **very good** advice and support. This is a very great improvement since the previous inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pastoral system is strong and students generally value the very good support and guidance they receive from their tutors and subject teachers
- The induction for students joining the school in the sixth form is good
- Advice on entry to university is particularly thorough
- The school does not seek students' views and concerns sufficiently

Commentary

32. Students are very well supported through the tutorial system. The majority say that their progress is very well monitored on a regular basis, not only by their subject teachers and tutors, but also by senior staff. Individual support and guidance is usually very good and that given on university application is very thorough. Where tutors are very good, there is good, focused use of tutorial time. Students who join the school in the sixth form say that they are able to fit in well and are well supported in settling in by both tutors and subject teachers. Talks about 'gap year' opportunities and entry to higher education inform students well. However, some students say they would benefit from having earlier and better guidance about selecting their A-level courses, as some choices had limited career paths and university selection. The advice offered by Connexions advisers is generally seen as helpful by those students who seek it.

33. The prefects and house captains take an active role in the daily routine and extra-curricular activities around the school. Students volunteer their services to mentor Year 7 students and support the form tutors in the morning sessions. The link with students at the adjacent special school is very strong and many sixth form students give of their own time to take part in supporting pupils there. However, a significant number of students say their views are seldom sought. Whilst they can approach senior staff with ideas, requests particularly in respect of increasing sports opportunities have not always been acted upon. Several students said they felt that they could make a much more significant contribution to school life if encouraged to do so.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has strengthened its links with parents, other schools and the community so in each case, partnerships are **good**. The reputation of the sixth form has improved among the local community so most students stay on and about twenty new students a year join the school in Year 12.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The excellent 'bridging project' ensures that students settle quickly and are keen to be as successful as those in other year groups
- Parents are very pleased with the way the school enables their children to be successful, so they work well with the school to help with this
- Reports on students' progress give parents useful information about effort but not enough clarity about exactly how well they are doing or how to improve
- Students benefit greatly from the best links the school has with its community, although the scope for sixth formers to learn from experiences outside formal study is more limited than usual
- The school provides parents with a good range of information about its work

Commentary

34. In the main school and the sixth form links with other schools are good. Those with the adjacent special school and primary schools involved in the 'bridging project' are exceptionally strong and of huge benefit to all the students involved. Sixth form volunteers take part in a lively, varied programme of activities designed to ensure that pupils move on from primary to secondary school happily and keep on working at an appropriately high level. Year 6 pupils are delighted with the imaginative range of work and the personalised welcome booklet from current Year 7 students. Students who give up their time to work with pupils in the special school next door are highly valued by both schools. The mutual benefit of friendship and better understanding and practical outcomes, such as the trip to Disneyland for special school pupils organised and made possible by sixth formers, are priceless.

35. The school has worked hard to forge a more meaningful partnership with parents, not least through better written communication about events and students' progress. This is an area of significant improvement since the last inspection. The school sends home high-quality information regularly about its life and their children's work. As was evident during the inspection, parents' evenings are extremely well attended and carefully organised to show parents that they are key players in how well their children do. Written information on students' progress is useful but not always clear enough about just how high the standards are at which individuals are working and what precise steps they need to take to do even better in each subject. Relationships between home and school are good, resulting in a strong, shared focus on raising aspirations and achievement. Parents value this emphasis on success. They think the school is doing a very good job in educating their children and are very supportive and proud of the school. Their only slight reservation about their contact with the school is that they feel that consultation on proposed changes could be better. The inspection team agrees.

36. Links with the community as a whole are good and of benefit to students in each year group because they help to enrich and extend their experiences. For example, those on the school council have been given a meaningful opportunity to work with representatives from the local council and planning office to improve facilities for young people in the town. Foreign exchanges help the students who take part to develop skills in other languages and learn about other cultures at first hand. Not everyone has the chance to be a school council representative or spend time in a European town. The school has not made the most of the Internet and regular visits to places of cultural or subject-specific interest to widen the horizons and broaden the experience of all students, including sixth formers. The range of trips, visiting speakers and extra-curricular activities, though good, is not as broad and vibrant as in sixth forms in other grammar schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the school by the headteacher and other key staff is **very good**, and management is **good**. The quality of governance in guiding the direction of the school is good but the governing body is not ensuring full compliance with statutory requirements.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's very clear vision for the school has been shared with the governors, the senior management team and all adults in the school
- The expertise of members of the senior management team is complementary and has a great impact on the success of the school
- The governing body makes a major contribution to the work and direction of the school, but has not ensured the school meets all statutory requirements
- Issues identified through honest self-evaluation are tackled well by linked school and departmental planning
- Professional development to support teachers' and school priorities is effective

Commentary

37. The governing body is committed in its support of the headteacher and the school. It is involved in the creation of the school development plan and monitors its implementation and progress well. Governors know the strengths and weaknesses of the school well and have priorities for development, but these are more focused on finance and accommodation than on teaching and learning. They challenge the school about its progress, for example asking departments for analyses of the results of national examinations and tests. Whilst there are links between some governors and departments within the school, these are not effective enough in providing an overview of school life.

38. The headteacher is committed to ensuring the highest possible standards of achievement and has a very clear vision for the school which is shared by governors and staff. He places great emphasis on the development of the whole individual. A very effective leadership team has been created at all levels of the school. Members lead by example as good classroom practitioners and as good role models for other staff and students. Good communication exists between and across all leadership groups within the school. The headteacher knows staff well, being very supportive both personally and professionally, and values the contributions made by all members of the school, including the students.

39. Management of whole-school issues and of departments and the provision for special educational needs are good. Although standards are already significantly above average, the headteacher and senior management team are not complacent and continually strive for improvement. Examination and other test results are thoroughly analysed to compare attainment both against other schools and between subjects and teaching groups. The staff are now receiving much more useful and detailed information about their students. Senior managers and heads of department observe colleagues teach, thus monitoring classroom practice. However, this monitoring has not yet ensured consistency in the best practice of, for example, the range of teaching strategies or informative marking. Senior managers' self-evaluation of the school is accurate. The issues identified are reflected in the school development plan: a very good document focused on raising achievement and clearly reflecting the aims and goals of the school. All staff are aware of the priorities for improvement, and training has been provided to support the success of the plan. Departmental development plans link well with the school plan: a significant improvement since the last inspection.

40. Procedures for the performance management of teachers are fully in place. Formal annual reviews include appropriate support when needed and inform decisions about professional development, linked to whole-school targets and subject priorities for improving teaching and learning. The school provides good support for teachers new to the profession, and the good induction programme for newly appointed teachers enables them to feel well supported. The school sees the continuing professional and academic development of staff as a high priority, and

promotes well a culture of sharing good practice through, for example, the internal seminars using the expertise of a staff learning group. Problems of recruitment are tackled effectively and the school is successful in keeping effective staff. The school provides good administrative support for staff.

41. The financial resources available to the school are focused well to support the development plan. The school receives an income per student which is below the national median. The requirement that heads of department should justify, and agree with the headteacher, their budgets gives them a better understanding of whole-school issues. It is part of their professional development and helps the headteacher maintain his good understanding of the school situation. Financial control is rigorous and the school applies the principles of best value well.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,044,472	Balance from previous year	111,734
Total expenditure	2,992,961	Balance carried forward to the next	163,245
Expenditure per pupil	3,184		

Sixth form

Leadership of the sixth form is **very good** because it is focused sharply on enabling all students to do as well they can. Management of the sixth form is **effective**. Governance of the sixth form is good. The school does not comply with the requirement for all sixth form students to be provided with religious education in line with the locally agreed syllabus.

Main strengths

- The sixth form is led very well with a resolute focus on providing effective support to ensure that all students do as well as they can
- Pastoral care has been improved greatly and is well organised and managed
- Sixth form courses and outcomes are reviewed with care to check that students' aspirations are met

Commentary

42. Leadership of the sixth form academic and pastoral teams is very good and has resulted in significant improvement in everyday support offered to students, as well as a much sharper focus on the quality of sixth form education provided. Teams of tutors have been set up with a firm expectation that they will be more than just administrators who check registers. Many tutors already go the extra mile in support of their students and take care to identify under-performance and deal with the reasons. This is a huge improvement on the last inspection when the tutorial system barely existed. The sixth form is more cohesive and enjoys a far better working atmosphere as a result, so retention rates from Years 11 to 12 have improved. The head of sixth form is very well aware of where shortcomings exist and has a very clear view of what changes are needed to improve the quality of education in the sixth form still further.

43. Management and review of teaching, learning, the curriculum and pastoral matters in the sixth form are good. Teaching staff and tutors are learning to work collaboratively to monitor achievement and set high, but realistic targets for individual students as they progress through Years 12 and 13. Information is shared very effectively among key staff, for example, with high quality preparation for university applications and an impressive rate of success for students in acceptance at their first choice university.

44. Governors support the school well with good scrutiny of the work of the sixth form, including careful analysis of any apparent dips in performance in subjects. As a result, changes have already been made to the AS mathematics course, for example. Management of the sixth form is good and involves the same systems and procedures as the main school, in general, including financial planning and review.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Very Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A strong staff team which is well led, has high expectations of learners and provides enthusiastic teaching
- Very good planning of courses and lessons to support teachers in meeting students' learning needs
- The ability to review practice in order to plan for development
- Insufficient systematic monitoring to assess the impact of teaching and to identify and share best practice

Commentary

Examination results

45. Year 9 test results in 2003 were very high, in the top five per cent of schools. They were average for similar schools. GCSE results in English and English literature, in 2003, were significantly above the national average for boys and girls. Very good examination results have been maintained since the last inspection.

Standards and achievement

46. Students' standards in speaking and listening are well above average. Students speak and listen to each other and teachers with enthusiasm, confidence, maturity and sustained concentration. All students in Years 7 to 9 contribute well to teacher led discussions. Higher-attaining students articulate ideas clearly through extended personal and critical responses, for example when analysing Macbeth's motives, during group and class discussions. Standards of reading aloud are well above average and students are able to read demanding texts at sight. Personal, narrative and analytical writing is sustained. Students successfully use varied forms of writing for a range of readers. Standards of accuracy and fluency are very high. Students demonstrate a good knowledge of plot and characters in challenging texts, for example in Year 8 responses to Dickens' short story 'The Signal Man'. GCSE students achieve high levels of reading response, written and spoken work. They articulate ideas well, for instance, an exploration of the links between minor characters and the social, historical and cultural context of 'To Kill A Mockingbird.' They make perceptive notes on coursework and examination texts, including a wide range of challenging pre- and post-1914 poems, short stories, plays and novels from varied cultures. Students start in Year 7 with very high attainment levels and, in maintaining these, they achieve well.

Teaching and learning

47. Features of effective teaching include very good subject knowledge to support students in their learning. Positive relationships between teachers and students enable good progress. Very good planning, high teacher expectations, appropriate challenge, pace and the management of learning are effectively combined. Teachers focus on skill development to support students' use of language and understanding of literature. Homework is set regularly to consolidate and extend students' learning. Marking on final assignments is constructive, recognising achievement. Good examples of marking which helped students understand how to improve their work were seen, as well as opportunities for student self-assessment encouraging independent learning. However, this good practice is not universal and not all students are supported to improve their work, through re-drafting, or by specific improvement targets focusing on National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades.

Leadership and management

48. The leadership has developed a team of well-qualified specialist teachers who share a common purpose, pool resources and share their expertise. The focus on raising standards has resulted in very good work on curriculum planning, a significant improvement from the last inspection. Effective self-evaluation leads to appropriate development planning priorities that contribute to school objectives. The use of ICT to support teaching and learning was not observed although it is evident in display, curriculum planning and coursework for all year groups. Good displays encourage learning and achievement. Currently, monitoring of lessons is insufficiently systematic to assess the impact of teaching and learning methods, for example the opportunities for independent learning.

Drama

49. The explicit teaching of drama skills was not evident from the English lessons observed. However, it is clear from the scrutiny of documentation that National Curriculum requirements are met through the integration of drama within planned teaching in Years 7 to 11. For instance, students in Years 7 and 8 follow a five-week introduction to Shakespeare and perform extracts of one of his plays. Year 9 students study a Shakespeare play in depth to meet the requirements of the national testing. An essential part of their preparation for the tests is to explore the text in performance.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

50. Students' competence in using literacy skills is very good. Although the school has not produced a cross-curricular literacy policy, departments incorporate planning for the development of literacy skills in their teaching. In geography, history, music, religious education and science, the students are expected to use terminology and key vocabulary in a way that develops their knowledge, understanding and skills. Key words are on display. Strategies for reading texts for information are taught well in history. Glossaries are used for effective reference skills in music and science lessons. Good extended writing is evident in mathematics, and in history where students make significant progress in structuring essays through the use of writing frames. Structured note taking is well taught in geography. Paired and group discussion features strongly in citizenship, religious education, science and history. A senior manager has recently assumed responsibility for cross-curricular literacy and, as a consequence, monitoring and lesson observations will be used to evaluate the impact of literacy skills on students' learning. The school's priority is centred on the development of writing skills.

Modern foreign languages

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

French	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Very good

German	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Spanish	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	N/a	Well above average
Achievement	N/a	Excellent
Teaching and learning	N/a	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths

- Teachers' very good linguistic skills support the development of these skills in students very well
- Well-planned lessons with a range of activities capture students' interest
- Very rapid progress by those who begin Spanish in year 10
- Excellent accommodation and very good resources create a fertile environment for learning
- Leadership has created a shared vision which has resulted in the improvements in many aspects

Commentary

Examination results

51. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above those reported nationally. GCSE results in 2003 in French, German and Spanish were significantly above average.

Standards and achievement

52. In Year 9 in French, most students write and speak using two or three tenses and in top sets they produce very accurate written and spoken work, but this does not accord with the extremely high teacher assessments. In Year 11, most students produce work which meets the requirements of the higher grades at GCSE and higher-attaining students' work is very fluent and highly accurate in the context of GCSE topics. In a Year 11 French class, students had very well-developed listening skills and coped confidently with a lesson conducted entirely in French and replied to unexpected questions with ease and fluency.

53. By Year 9 in German, most students have a good grasp of basic grammar and speak and write accurately within defined contexts and some higher-attaining students use the language creatively and with confidence. By Year 11, most students have a very good vocabulary base and a good knowledge of the key structures of the language. In a Year 10 German class, students spoke

with confidence and fluency and had a very good grasp of grammatical patterns. Higher-attaining students are very accurate and have well-developed communication strategies. By the end of Year 11, after only two years' study of Spanish, students speak and write with remarkable fluency and accuracy on the GCSE topics and have very high standards in listening and speaking. In a Year 11 Spanish class, students spoke and wrote confidently using present, past and future tenses and enriched their language by using more complex structures and a wide range of vocabulary. Pronunciation is generally very good in all three languages, but on occasions some students in French, including higher-attaining students, have very anglicised pronunciation. Most students achieve very well because lessons have a clear structure and work is well matched to students' needs and good support is given to individuals.

Teaching and learning

54. Teachers' very good linguistic skills have a very positive impact on learning, especially the development of listening and speaking. Students in all three languages respond well to brisk, well-structured lessons, which make use of stimulating activities and resources. They particularly benefit from clear explanations of grammatical rules, which enable them to generate their own language effectively. They learn very well when given the opportunity to work in pairs or groups. This combination was particularly evident in a Year 10 German class, where students produced extended creative role plays, demonstrating their fluency and accuracy when speaking and writing German. The marking of students' work is very thorough and comments are very encouraging, but do not guide students on how to improve. Teachers do not set clear targets to help students progress by making standards and expectations clear. Students' learning is particularly enhanced by the very good relationships between teachers and students. The limited use of ICT results in some missed opportunities for independent learning.

Leadership and management

55. The head of faculty and heads of department share a very clear vision and have developed a strong team of skilled teachers, who work very hard to achieve their goals. The leadership and management have a positive impact on achievement by the systematic monitoring of students' attainment and progress. The accommodation, resources and attractive displays are an aid to learning. Standards, teaching, leadership and management and resources are better than at the time of the last report.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Very high	Very high
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers explain work well, so that students learn new skills and techniques quickly
- Most teachers question students very well but missed opportunities sometimes lead to lessons where students are not fully involved in learning
- Students respond very well to the high academic demands that teachers make of them
- Teachers keep good records of progress but students do not always know what they have to do in order to improve
- Teachers do not make enough use of ICT in teaching and learning except in writing up the results of coursework investigations

Commentary

Examination results

56. Results in the Year 9 tests in 2003 were very high, compared to national averages, as they have been for several years. They were average for similar schools. GCSE results in 2003 were significantly above average. Boys performed slightly better than girls. Very nearly all students gained A* to C grades: this was twice the national average.

Standards and achievement

57. Standards on entry to the school are high. Students make good progress and achieve well at all stages. In the current Year 9, students use cumulative frequency graphs and related statistical measures to describe sets of data and they use Pythagoras' theorem and the angle properties of shapes and parallel lines to solve geometry problems. By Year 11, the highest-attaining students have a good grasp of vector geometry and its application to problems involving forces and motion. They solve problems using trigonometry and know how transformations, such as translations, affect the equation of a curve and the resulting shape and position of the graph. All students have a very good grasp of algebra and arithmetic, typically solving equations of all kinds and finding the areas and volumes of shapes such as sectors of circles, cones and cylinders. Students' investigations are of high quality. They state what they are investigating and make predictions which they then test using the data they have collected. They explain results and come to well-argued conclusions. The best GCSE coursework employs statistical correlation techniques that are usually not taught until A-level courses.

Teaching and learning

58. Within the overall picture, some teaching is very good and occasionally excellent. Students make good progress and achieve well in most lessons because teachers explain new skills and techniques very well, for example using the idea of a 'number balance' to solve equations. Sometimes, however, teachers attempt too much. For example, in a lesson on straight-line graphs, the introduction of too many new ideas restricted the time that students had to consolidate learning and reduced their rate of progress. Teachers generally question students well, inviting them to explain in their own words how, for example, arithmetical patterns can be described using algebraic formulae. Teachers have high expectations, to which students respond very well. Students use ICT well to present investigation and coursework reports, but lack of regular access in lesson times restricts opportunities for teachers to use ICT in teaching and learning.

59. Teaching groups in Years 8 to 11 have been reorganised to improve provision for higher-attaining students. However, in Year 7 mixed classes teachers do not always plan sufficiently well for different groups of students. The excellent teaching seen was a very good combination of particularly challenging work and skilled explanation of solving quadratic equations by 'completing the square'. A small group of gifted and talented mathematicians took this further, examining the conditions that lead to quadratic equations having two, one or no solutions.

60. The school maintains good records of students' progress, derived mainly from a thorough and regular programme of tests. Results are recorded in 'Profile booklets' and students have a good understanding of how well they are doing. However, comments about how to improve, such as 'concentrate more on what I write', are not geared closely enough to specific mathematics skills and techniques.

Leadership and management

61. The management has ensured that high standards and good teaching have been maintained, despite a period of high staff turnover. Provision for gifted and talented students and assessment procedures have improved. However, weaknesses in the use of ICT to support teaching and learning, and in monitoring the quality of teaching that were identified in the last inspection have still to be rectified.

Mathematics across the curriculum

62. Students are very competent in mathematics. Students make extensive use of their skills in science, for instance in studying laws of motion, and in geography, where students use data handling skills effectively in analysing population statistics. Use of mathematics in other subjects is satisfactory.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well above average standards and the very good student attitudes to work which contribute to them
- New initiatives to develop independent learning skills are effectively raising levels of learning
- Lack of self-esteem in the remnant of lower band sets in year 11 reduces the overall achievement
- Very good teachers step back to allow gifted students to shine, but are also alert to student problems on a day-to-day basis
- Accommodation is currently unsatisfactory

Commentary

Examination results

63. In the Year 9 tests, in 2003, results were very high, in the top five per cent nationally. They were average for similar schools. GCSE results in 2003 were, collectively, above average, bearing in mind that the national averages for separate sciences are themselves very high. Results in physics and in double award science were significantly above their respective cohorts. Results in biology were broadly average. Results in chemistry met the national average but had a significant number of D grades, reflecting some staffing instability. Result showed no significant variation between boys and girls. Students did particularly well in physics, where 55 per cent attained grades A*/A compared with 38 per cent nationally.

Standards and achievement

64. On entry to the school, attainment in the Year 6 tests is very high, and students have a secure above average understanding, for example of balanced forces. Yet in terms of practical skills and knowledge of equipment, they are no better than average and have a skills deficit to make up. The work seen in Year 9 was well above average, particularly in literacy and numeracy, and the standards are more evenly spread across the Year 9 attainment bands. Achievement is thus very good. Coursework in Years 10 and 11 is very good but shows much less use of ICT than is usual, to the detriment of redrafting. Standards observed in Year 11 top sets were well above average but there is a degree of underachievement in the B sets, studying double award science, that show lack of self-esteem even though the students are well above average. Standards in numeracy are well above average with particular strength in the triple science extension modules in physics and chemistry. Literacy competence is shown particularly in some of the biology research homework, such as on health issues, but also in work on astronomy and earth science. Overall, therefore, achievement is good and shows signs of improvement with the abolition of the old banding system.

Teaching and learning

65. Teachers' knowledge and understanding of science are very good. They provide very good role models in all three science areas and work very well together. A great deal of work has been carried out recently in the creation of course notes, which improve the teaching of science concepts, the use of key words and literacy in general, and the involvement of the students in their own self-assessment. Together with assessment tasks which emphasise the understanding of skills, they lead to very good learning. The department has been working to develop independent learning styles which have resulted in very good learning, not only in the fast track sets, but also in the 'lower' sets. This was seen in such diverse areas as an imaginative Year 7 lesson on forces, challenging Year 9 lessons on gravity and earth materials, and fast paced Year 11 lessons on hormones and on fish. The best lessons all gave space for students to think for themselves and make their own contribution to the lesson, through simple techniques such as paired work or setting a question and waiting the few minutes necessary for independent thought. It was also characterised by good assessment on a minute-to-minute basis such that the teacher was alert to what the students were thinking. This is a weaker aspect of the teaching of new staff. They are attempting to use these methods, but sometimes over direct activities and are not alert to student learning or clear in explanation. In many cases the students can compensate for this, because of very good attitudes and skills, so that learning is sometimes better than teaching, but lower-attaining students sometimes do get lost.

Leadership and management

66. The faculty has identified what needs to be done to improve teaching and learning, and has done an immense amount of well-coordinated teamwork, with subject specialists learning from one another. New teachers do not fully grasp the purposes behind some of the techniques, such as paired work, and how to be more alive to student thought. The lead given by physicists on communicating assessment information to students needs to be disseminated. Currently work in ICT is hampered by the lack of access to resources and the shortage of laboratories is having a negative impact on teacher workload and student routine. Current plans will tackle this, although they will not solve it completely. Extra-curricular links, curriculum enrichment and community links are very good, and this makes a positive contribution to the school ethos. Since the previous inspection, a number of effective initiatives in curriculum innovation and independent teaching and learning styles have been implemented.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are well above average, but the monitoring of attainment in Years 7 to 9 is inadequate and leads to inaccurate final assessments
- The disjointed experience in Years 7 to 9 results in students forgetting what they last did, and lower than expected standards
- The use of generic teaching materials does not always fit the needs of students
- Leadership is strong, but there are too many complex management demands, and points identified in the last report have not all been dealt with

Commentary

Examination results

67. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were very high. These assessments were not linked sufficiently to the national criteria and their accuracy is therefore unreliable. The results in the GCSE short course were well above average, but suffered a drop in 2003 due to ambiguous interpretation of the requirements of GCSE coursework. Girls did better than boys.

Standards and achievement

68. Current standards in Year 9, seen in the work sample and in lessons, are average. They are below what might be expected as a result of the curriculum arrangements in Years 8 and 9. Students do not cover as much work as other students of their age because they only have a lesson every other week. In one Year 9 lesson, students had forgotten a lot of the learning in the previous lesson because of a four-week gap. Students are reaching good standards in the control technology simulation work done in Years 7 to 9. In the time they have available, students' achievement is satisfactory.

69. All students in the GCSE years can design a database system with rules that ensure easy use, and are able to evaluate different methods to find the best approach. The course work assignments all follow the same pattern. This results in a tight structure, but the work lacks links or application to other areas of study.

Teaching and learning

70. The department is now using teaching resources in Years 7 to 9 that have been developed to assist all schools. These materials do not fully match the needs of the students, however, because they are intended for a continuous weekly input, and are not designed specifically for a Grammar school. Teaching is clear and makes good use of software to demonstrate techniques. Students' attitudes towards the subject are mostly good. It is only when lessons are less well planned that problems with concentration and insufficient challenge arise. Students then become restless and achievement becomes unsatisfactory. Some of the work seen in folders shows that not all students are taking the subject as seriously as they should, because of the disjointed experience.

71. Year 11 students who summon assistance from the teacher are given knowledgeable and helpful advice. Students are encouraged to solve problems and help each other well but, because of large group sizes, some students are left to their own devices. Students achieved very well, in a Year 11 lesson, when they had opportunities to incorporate mathematical thinking into the programming of a counter system for a swimming pool. This extended the learning for the most able students well.

Leadership and management

72. A very good strategic plan, with department and school priorities clearly considered, has been costed so that other managers are well informed. The leadership is resourceful and dedicated but overloaded because of the conflicting demands of technical network management and managing teaching and learning. Minimal marking and monitoring in Years 7 to 9 has the consequence that students' achievements do not build towards a secure final level.

73. There has been improvement in the provision of computers but issues in the last report about access to ICT, the deployment of staff, inconsistent achievement in Years 7 to 9, and the cross-curricular use of ICT in important subjects, still remain.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

74. Students have good personal ICT skills and apply them well in homework. English, mathematics and science subjects do not make sufficient use of ICT in their lessons. Good use is made of ICT in geography, history, food technology and textiles. The use of computer-aided design and manufacturing is very good in textiles. Although art and music have satisfactory facilities, teachers are not able to solve some issues that are associated with older equipment and the lack of technical training. The school currently lacks modern interactive whiteboards. It is recognised that the new building will provide better provision for ICT in the proposed learning resources centre.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well above average standards because students learn very well
- ICT is used very well to support learning
- Innovations in curriculum, teaching and learning
- Teaching is very well planned to develop thinking skills
- Limited opportunities for fieldwork in years 7 to 9

Commentary

Examination results

75. The results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above those reported nationally. These results have shown an upward trend over the past three years. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were significantly above average with the percentage of students achieving the higher grades A* to B being more than double the national average. Results over the past three years show an upward trend.

Standards and achievement

76. Current standards in Year 9, in students' recorded work and in lessons, are well above average. Students demonstrate a good grounding in map skills. They use ordnance survey maps confidently, translate contour lines into relief, and make accurate calculations using scale. Data collected during investigations on methods of travel to school is presented in different forms using computers to generate a variety of graphs. Students understand that human activities affect the environment, as in the exploitation of the rainforest, and some of the ways in which these negative impacts can be minimised. Their study of contrasting environments shows awareness of global issues which affect less economically developed countries. The standard of work improves significantly between Years 7 and 9, indicating very good achievement based on a very strong work ethos.

77. The standard of work produced by students at the end of Year 11 is well above average. They relate earthquakes and volcanoes to plate tectonics and understand their impact on both the physical and human environment. They make good use of the Internet to research recent information and use this effectively to generate discussions. They use cost-benefit analysis in decision making on coastal development projects. Independent learning skills are applied to real-life situations when they investigate the feasibility of building a bypass for Bourne. In their study of the exploitation of natural resources such as oil and gas, the students recognise the importance of recycling and the development of alternative sources of energy. Demographic studies enable them to discuss the morality of population control policies in different parts of the world. The very strong desire to succeed and the very good support given by the staff enable the students to achieve very well. They use their independent learning skills, their ability to access information, organise relevant materials and discuss issues rationally, to make very good progress.

Teaching and learning

78. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge effectively to challenge the students' analytical skills. The work is well planned with a range of learning skills incorporated with a focus on the development of thinking skills. However, there was a slight tendency to over-teach in some lessons where students are capable of producing an end product independently. Good questioning and the use of local examples stimulate the students' interest as in a Year 7 lesson on settlement studies. Resources are used very well to bring lessons to life, for example the video report on trophy hunting in southern Africa. The very good relationship with students creates a very good atmosphere for learning.

Leadership and management

79. The department has a clear vision for development with high expectations for attainment. A very good team ethos and a self-critical approach lead to improvement and efforts to be innovative. For example, the recent overseas residential fieldwork which sought to increase recruitment to the subject indicates the desire to maintain progress. Fieldwork opportunities are provided in Years 10 and 11 but provision is very limited in Years 7 to 9. Opportunities for students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are carefully planned into the schemes of work. All issues raised in the last report have been resolved and the use of computers to enhance teaching and learning is well developed.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	High	High
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths

- Students are challenged to think, evaluate and analyse at a high level by their teachers
- Students' enthusiasm for their work leads them to strive hard and achieve very well
- The emphasis upon developing high-level historical skills in lessons enables all students to tackle very searching tasks extremely well
- Thorough marking with clear targets for improvement helps students achieve

Commentary

Examination results

80. Results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above those reported nationally. GCSE results in 2003 were significantly above the national average.

Standards and achievement

81. On entry in Year 7 students' standards are generally above average. Year 7 students showed very good oral ability when explaining how William the Conqueror controlled England. Standards of work in the present Year 9 are high. Students' written work shows particularly high-level skills in extended writing, analysis and evaluation and students achieve very well. In Years 10 and 11, students have high-level skills that they use exceptionally well, again leading to high standards. In GCSE work, students analysed cartoons with considerable skill, drawing on extensive general knowledge of Nazi Germany. These students are also achieving very well.

Teaching and learning

82. Students respond exceptionally well to teachers' high expectations of them. Teachers very carefully plan a variety of appropriate challenges. These interest students and challenge them to think, analyse and evaluate. Consequently, nearly all students confidently use high-level skills in compiling high-quality essay work by the end of Year 9. Teacher and student relationships are very strong and humour is often very well used to engage students in their work. In one lesson, many were horrified by a memo from the Headteacher laying out very severe new rules, not realising at first that the teacher was showing them what dictatorship is. The very structured examination technique work strengthens GCSE students' knowledge of how to raise their grades. This was exemplified in essay planning on the War in Vietnam. Students prepared essays collaboratively, analysing and evaluating America's search and destroy policy. Such work underpins the excellent results in public examinations results attained each year. All teachers give very good support to students and monitor progress very well. Marking is very thorough giving clear targets for improvement. Very appropriate homework is regularly set. Students' historical vocabulary is very well developed by use of displays. The planned teaching offers a good variety of opportunities to develop students' knowledge of citizenship and their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development. ICT is used well in lessons to support learning.

Leadership and management

83. There is a very clear determination to maintain high standards. Very strong teamwork has ensured the success of the department. A skilfully planned new programme of activities generates immense interest in the subject and the numbers taking the GCSE option continues to increase. The well-planned trips, such as those to the Holocaust centre and to the Flanders Great War sites, enhance the course considerably.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good achievement by Year 11 enables students to reach well above average standards
- Students develop their knowledge well, but their understanding is less well developed
- Younger students' achievement, while satisfactory, reflects low expectations in some topics
- Planned teaching in Years 7 to 9 places insufficient emphasis on developing skills of analysis
- Very good leadership provides an effective classroom role model and manages change well

Commentary

Examination results

84. Results in the full religious studies course in 2003 were significantly above average. Students performed significantly better, in comparison to national norms, than in the other subjects they took. Results in the short course followed by all Year 11 students were also significantly above average.

Standards and achievement

85. Year 9 students have a good understanding of the Buddhist path to enlightenment, the Hindu cycle of rebirth, what is common to Jewish people, and how and why Christians worship. They are more secure in describing general features and common values and practices in religions than in explaining, with examples, the diversity of practice, belief and organisation within religious communities in England today. By Year 9, all students are aware of the characteristics of the main religions, but do not use the overview of one religion to plan how to investigate similarities and differences in another. Satisfactory gains in knowledge are not matched by the development of the higher level skills, required by the syllabus, to demonstrate how religious authorities and teachings are interpreted and challenged by their communities today.

86. Year 11 full-course students combine very good information, commentary, analysis and evaluation when studying Christianity and Islam in today's society. All students demonstrate very good understanding of why euthanasia and abortion present individuals of all persuasions with challenges to their beliefs and values. High literacy skills mask weaker subject knowledge and understanding in a significant number of students. All Year 11 students compare and contrast very well traditions within religions, and identify very clearly attitudes and key beliefs when looking at moral issues. They are not as confident in using the source materials of religions to check authenticity and interpretation.

Teaching and learning

87. In Years 7 to 9, good teaching focuses on the general characteristics, stories and key terms of religions but not enough on analysing their significance for different groups in Judaism or Christianity. Good teaching methods provide a variety of opportunities for pupils to share ideas with each other, which pupils do well. Where there is good use of authentic religious sources, pupils' engagement in their study is good, and they make good notes informally. In weaker teaching, historical events and human actions are over emphasised with too little attention to their significance for groups of Jews and Christians today.

88. Very good practice in Years 10 and 11 uses a variety of teaching methods giving regular opportunities for students to learn together in groups, stimulated by very good preparation of support materials which reflect lifestyles today.

Leadership and management

89. Leadership is aware of strengths and needs in the subject and is providing a very good role model in planning, display, command of the subject, and leading a team. Good management supports this with clear, relevant documentation and good awareness of responsibilities. The planned teaching in Years 7 to 9 currently lacks a correct balance over the three years and does not provide sufficient challenge for higher-attaining students. The focus of development plans is appropriate. All students now follow an accredited course in Years 10 and 11.

TECHNOLOGY

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

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above Average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students experience a good foundation for GCSE in Years 7 to 9 and go on to gain very high GCSE results overall
- There is some outstanding attainment in food technology and textiles
- The small graphics room and insufficient use of ICT in resistant materials are having a negative affect on achievement
- The monitoring and assessment of attainment is not linked sufficiently to the National Curriculum in Years 7 to 9

Commentary

Examination results

90. Results of teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, in 2003, were well above those reported nationally. Girls' results were higher than boys'. GCSE results in 2003 were significantly above average. All students were entered, unlike the national picture, and the proportion of grades A* to C was almost double the national proportion. Girls' attainment was higher than boys' but by a smaller margin than nationally. Over the last four years, food technology and textiles have had outstanding results and other courses have improved.

Standards and achievement

91. Students start Year 7 with varied previous experiences. Standards are average with some students lacking confidence in drawing and experimenting with ideas. Standards in textiles, in Year 7, are high and students achieve well because teaching makes learning memorable and fun. Year 8 students make good progress and are able to work together as a team to design board games because of the excellent attitudes and co-operation between students. This work also allows the most able students to take a leading role. Year 9 students in food technology, research and use technical information to create new food products. Through a process of designing, trialling and testing, with good use made of ICT to enhance work, students achieve a very solid foundation for GCSE. They progress and adopt a scientific approach to their work in Year 11. Very high standards were also seen in Year 11 textiles, where there is attention to detail and creative designing. Work in resistant materials and graphics was not progressing as fast.

Teaching and learning

92. The quality of teaching is inconsistent in Years 7 to 9. The planning of lessons does not exploit techniques from the national improvement programme. Teaching was often very good but when it was less successful, teachers talked for too long and did not use the best past examples of students' work to illustrate what was required. Design work in resistant materials is restricted by the small spaces in the students' workbook and presentation skills were not encouraged sufficiently. Students get limited experiences in using electronics components and materials are not combined with modern components. This limits the range and interest of the work.

93. GCSE teaching is very good when the teacher has high expectations of students and they show what makes a difference between examination grades, using examples of very high scoring previous examination work. Students' very perceptive comments show they understand the differences and this helps them improve their own work. They accept the challenge and are inspired by the teaching. In less successful, though not unsatisfactory, lessons some students do not listen to advice in the same way and are allowed to talk during briefing sessions.

94. Inconsistency is also present in teaching in graphics and resistant materials. The graphics room is very under-sized for the numbers using it and the overcrowded conditions affect the quality of the teaching and learning. ICT is not used sufficiently and presentation suffers, particularly for the boys who are not so organised as the girls. Students partly make up for these deficiencies by making good efforts to complete folder work at home.

Leadership and management

95. The leadership is dedicated and reflective. The department is very well organised. The development plan focuses mostly on improvements to the accommodation and resources, inconsistencies in teaching are not considered sufficiently. The marking of students' work in Years 7 to 9 is not linked to National Curriculum criteria. This adversely affects the monitoring of progress and reporting of attainment and does not allow a rapid overview of how groups of students are doing. Library resources are good for food and textiles, but the range of books for graphics and resistant materials is small.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art

Provision in art is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan lessons and use assessment to enable students to develop independent learning
- Very good relationships which allow students to develop artistic confidence
- Students' work is creative, imaginative and of high quality
- The use of ICT is insufficiently developed as an artistic medium for art

Commentary

Examination results

96. Results of teacher assessment in Year 9, in 2003, were above the average of those reported nationally. GCSE results in 2003 were significantly above average and continued a rising trend.

Standards and achievement

97. By Year 9, students develop good observational drawing skills with expressive use of line and tone using pencil, pastels and chalks. They effectively explore and present a variety of themes, such as movement, in paint, mixed media and clay. Their research on artists, and their ability to document their own artistic processes show good progress from Year 7. By the end of Year 11, students' practical and theoretical skills in art are very good. They develop transformational studies after visiting galleries and use their research on an extensive range of artists to inform their own highly creative and imaginative work. They successfully employ a range of materials and processes to achieve their desired effects and use artistic terminology very well when describing their own work.

Teaching and learning

98. Students benefit from knowledgeable teachers whose well-planned lessons establish good fine art foundations in Years 7 to 9, as well as developing students' literacy skills. Very good assessment, and advice and guidance given in a supportive atmosphere, help students to progress well and give them increasing levels of confidence as they progress through school. Carefully structured programmes of study encourage growing independence. Higher-attaining students are

not able to exercise their independence, through access to a wider range of artistic materials and processes, soon enough. Students respond very well to the challenging work and high standards demanded of them. The use of ICT is planned, and used to some extent, but its use as a learning tool in art is still in its infancy because the currently available computers are not able to manage the appropriate software.

Leadership and management

99. A clear vision is communicated sensitively and effectively. The department provides a positive image to the school as a whole. The development of social, moral and cultural awareness is very good. The department provides opportunities to work in an attractive and stimulating environment. Visits to major galleries support students' understanding and achievement. Since the last inspection, standards and teaching have improved and accommodation issues have been resolved.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well because of the very good support given by their teachers
- Leadership has ensured that the subject is consistently successful
- Marking in years 7 to 9 does not readily allow specific target setting
- Co-curricular opportunities are very good and support learning well

Commentary

Examination results

100. Results of the 2003 teacher assessments, at the end of Year 9, were significantly above the average of those reported nationally. GCSE results in 2003 were significantly above average, with 90 per cent of students gaining grades A* to C, compared to 65 per cent nationally.

Standards and achievement

101. Year 9 students aurally analyse two versions of a well-known traditional song and qualify their answers very accurately using specific musical terminology. Year 11 students develop their listening skills and methodically analyse the structure of a rondo, using their knowledge and understanding of key, dynamics and instrumentation. Achievement is very good across the school. With positive teacher support, all students are able to achieve as well as they can, with no significant difference between boys and girls. Talented students are provided with tasks which meet their needs.

Teaching and learning

102. Teachers display very strong knowledge of their subject and with skilful practical demonstrations are able to develop well the students' composing and performing skills. Constant encouragement, use of correct musical terminology and very good questioning enhances the

students' knowledge and understanding of all aspects of music. The newly developed topic books, clearly describing what will be learned in each topic and how it will be assessed, support students' learning very well. Students respond enthusiastically to teachers' high expectations of work and lessons maintain a brisk pace with all students focused on the task throughout. Very good attitudes to this subject and the good relationships which exist between staff and students create a very good learning environment, so students can achieve very well. Some opportunities were missed for students to participate in self and peer-assessment through listening to each other's performances, but when these happened, the students enjoyed the experience and were pleased with their success.

Leadership and management

103. A very good team, with complementary skills, has a shared vision for the future of the department, focused on achievement and the involvement of all. Teachers and peripatetic staff enable students to achieve very well in their performance skills in a very wide range of co-curricular activities. However, there are few opportunities for visits or visitors to enrich the general music curriculum. Classroom practice is regularly monitored to assess the quality of teaching and learning. Marking is not linked to National Curriculum criteria in Years 7 to 9, making it more difficult to guide students on what they need to do next to improve their work. Resources are good, but students do not have sufficient opportunity to use ICT to its best advantage. Since the last inspection, the accommodation has improved, classroom practice is monitored and a wider range of co-curricular activities has been introduced.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Overall, above-average standards are reached by students from a variety of previous experience
- Very good extra-curricular activities give opportunities for students to participate at a very high level, and support learning well
- Teaching provides clear explanations and students respond well to the challenge of high expectations and learn well
- Well-managed and planned activities meet the needs of all students well
- Students do not receive sufficient guidance on achievement levels and areas for improvement are not always identified in lessons

Commentary

Examination results

104. There are no examinations in physical education. Teacher assessments suggest that at the end of Year 9 and 11 students are above average.

Standards and achievement

105. Students enter the school from several primary schools and have had varying experience of physical education. In new activities, for example hurdling in athletics, standards are below average in Year 7 because students are in the early stages of learning techniques. Standards are average in most activities such as football. By Year 9, standards are above average and teachers have graded students accurately; students achieve well. In Year 11, standards are also above average, particularly in activities followed through the school. Students achieve well in relation to their earlier learning. Standards have been adversely affected by staffing issues, building work close to outdoor facilities and the time allocated to the subject, but are boosted by the very rich provision of extra-curricular activities. The standard achieved by large numbers of team players is high. Students represent the school and some compete at area, county and national level. Participation rates are high, but non-participants do not achieve as well as other students when they are not sufficiently involved by the teaching.

Teaching and learning

106. Teachers demonstrate well, give clear explanations, have high expectations, challenge students to achieve and make very good comparisons that help all students to understand. For example, in a very good Year 7 athletics lesson, the teacher helped students to understand how their hurdling heights compared with the expected height by the end of Year 9 and with the height expected for the international hurdler Colin Jackson. This helped students to be very clearly aware of the expectations of themselves and that of a first-class athlete and spurred them on to further improvement. In other lessons, teachers catered well for the needs of students at different stages of learning by giving alternative tasks, so all were able to work within their range of ability and fulfil tasks. Teachers usually check students' understanding and consolidate knowledge before moving onto new work, but aims of lessons are not always shared with students. Talented students are encouraged to participate in extra-curricular clubs and matches, they demonstrate in lessons, help with umpiring and supervision of house matches. Students' regular attendance and their very good attitudes assist their learning. Safety practices are adhered to well. Good use of video cameras assists observation and analysis of tasks and performances for improvement. Systems are in place for checking students' attainment, but these are not sufficiently shared with students for them to check their own progress and measure improvement.

Leadership and management

107. Too many current responsibilities for those with leadership roles make prioritising difficult. Very good management has ensured that students' needs are met by the activities provided. Since the previous inspection, good links with primary schools are developing although a sports co-ordinator has not been designated. Years 9 to 11 have a minimum allocation of time which narrows the curriculum offered and what can be achieved in lessons. It also precludes the department from a Sportsmark even though extra-curricular activities easily meet requirements. Facilities are good and have improved although there is a shortage of indoor accommodation in wet weather.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

The school offers no courses in this curriculum area.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching provides good opportunities to learn about the subject and the school provides good opportunities to put understanding into practice
- Students have very good attitudes to their studies so they complete assignments and contribute to their own learning well
- Assessment and recording of students' achievement are currently unsatisfactory
- The large team of teachers is supported well, but monitoring is not sufficiently rigorous to tackle wide variation in practice

Commentary

Examination results

108. The course does not lead to examination and little teacher assessment of standards is currently undertaken.

Standards and achievement

109. Standards seen during the inspection were above average in Years 7 to 9. By Year 9, students have very good knowledge and understanding of how local government and the legal system work and the roles of such global institutions as the United Nations. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 were also above average with Year 11 students having developed a good understanding of such issues as the rights and responsibilities of consumers, employers and employees. Students have developed very good skills of communication through writing and discussion.

Teaching and learning

110. Teachers encourage students to develop informed opinions and contribute effectively to group discussions. Students express their views at length in writing even though it is rarely marked. They maintain a good portfolio of their work. Teaching and learning are well supported by appropriate, modern textbooks with occasional off-timetable sessions to allow for visiting specialist speakers or specific citizenship activities. All students take part in a well-organised democratic process during the election of form representatives to the school council. The school council itself is a very good example of citizenship in action. In an observed meeting, students from Years 7 to 12 made articulate and thoughtful contributions to a discussion with a local councillor about how to improve local facilities for young people. They demonstrated very good skills of participation, sharing their ideas well and influencing other people's views. The Year 11 forum, which discusses and organises social activities for the year group, is another good opportunity for students to take part in the democratic process and shoulder extra responsibility. By the time they join the sixth form, students have a strong sense of responsibility. Several regularly volunteer to work with children with physical and profound learning difficulties. Another group raised funds to organise a trip abroad for

disabled children on the Jumbulance and accompanied them, providing help and companionship. Students' work is not regularly marked and they do not receive sufficient feedback on their performance. As a consequence, students do not value citizenship as highly as other subjects.

Leadership and management

111. Planned teaching has clear learning objectives and ensures adequate coverage of the required content. Sufficient and suitable resources are efficiently managed and distributed to the large team of teachers involved so that the teaching programme runs smoothly. With such a large team and with little training completed, teaching is too variable. Satisfactory methods to assess students' progress are in place, but they are poorly used because lines of responsibility are unclear. Monitoring is too informal and lacks sufficient rigour to ensure consistently high-quality teaching and regular marking.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003.

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art & design	2	100.0	80.1	0.0	23.7	30.0	29.9
Biology	9	100.0	65.2	11.1	11.1	27.8	20.6
Business studies	13	69.2	76.4	0.0	16.3	18.5	26.2
Chemistry	9	88.9	72.7	11.1	13.9	27.8	24.1
English/English language	20	90.0	82.9	10.0	17.5	30.5	28.7
English literature	8	100.0	85.9	25.0	19.1	36.3	30.2
French	19	94.7	78.2	52.6	18.9	41.6	27.6
Design and technology	7	85.7	74.9	28.6	15.1	35.7	25.3
General studies	19	78.9	73.9	15.8	17.8	26.8	25.7
Geography	1	100.0	74.3	100.0	19.8	60.0	26.5
German	5	100.0	81.5	60.0	19.3	48.0	28.9
History	12	100.0	80.7	33.3	19.5	40.8	28.9
Information technology	10	100.0	67.0	30.0	10.9	35.0	21.4
Mathematics	27	51.9	61.9	18.5	17.1	19.3	22.1
Music	1	100.0	86.5	0.0	21.4	30.0	30.7
Religious studies	13	60.5	80.2	15.4	22.6	20.8	29.8
Spanish	2	100.0	78.5	50.0	17.7	40.0	27.3
Sports/PE studies	8	75.0	73.2	21.2	17.4	29.6	25.7

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	4	100	98.6	75.0	50.2	105.0	87.5
Biology	30	100	96.4	46.7	39.2	85.3	78.6
Business studies	21	100	98.7	90.5	36.8	101.0	80.1
Chemistry	27	100	97.6	48.1	49.0	85.9	84.9
Computing	6	100	n/a	67	n/a	90.0	n/a
Design and technology	19	100	97.8	84.2	35.0	104.2	77.9
English/English language	35	100	99.4	48.6	36.3	91.4	80.9
English literature	23	100	99.5	78.3	46.5	106.1	86.5
French	18	100	98.8	50.0	51.5	84.4	87.6
General studies	103	100	94.7	40.8	31.0	82.5	73.1
Geography	10	100	98.7	80.0	44.5	108.0	84.0
German	10	100	98.4	70.0	47.9	96.0	84.8
History	23	100	99.6	100	44.6	113.0	84.6
Mathematics	33	100	96.7	63.6	55.6	93.9	88.8
Music	2	100	98.8	50.0	38.9	90.0	81.1
Physics	29	100	96.7	69.0	44.6	97.2	81.7
Religious studies	9	100	98.8	33.3	46.7	75.6	85.6
Spanish	3	100	98.3	33.3	50.2	80.0	86.9
Sports/PE studies	7	100	98.0	14.3	30.9	74.3	75.2
Theatre studies	6	100	99.5	83.3	40.1	100.0	83.6

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English language and French were focus subjects in this area. Lessons were sampled in English literature, theatre studies, German and Spanish.

Results in English literature were very high in 2003, as they had been the previous year. In the lesson observed, students achieved very well because excellent teaching used subject knowledge skilfully to challenge ideas and encourage independent thinking in relation to analysis of Philip Larkin's poetry. This resulted in impressive learning about complex literary concepts. Standards were very high.

In theatre studies, results were well above average in 2003, for a small group of students. They were average for a slightly larger group the previous year. Achievement, teaching and learning were good in the lesson observed and standards above average. As a result of teaching that made good use of knowledge of the text and examination requirements, students were able to identify dramatic features in the staging of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream', although boys needed more prompts than the girls to produce extended, independent responses.

Results in German, in 2003, were above average. They had been well above average for a small group in 2002. In an observed lesson, a very studious group of students, fully committed to their course, learned very well as a result of very good teaching designed to extend their vocabulary and skills in discussing political events in German. Standards were high.

All students passed their Spanish examination in 2003, but numbers were too few to make national comparisons. In the lesson seen, achievement was very good and standards well above average. Very good teaching ensured that students learned very well and had lively opportunities to develop and hone very good linguistic skills.

English

Provision in English language is **good**.

	Year 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students show a high level of personal interest in the subject and discuss their progress with considerable knowledge and understanding
- Teachers demonstrate expertise and enthusiasm which they share successfully with students to support their learning
- The provision of very good study support materials
- Teachers are aware of the need to develop further opportunities for independent learning

Commentary

Examination results

112. Results in 2003 were well above average, as they had been in 2002.

Standards and achievement

113. Large numbers of students choose this course in Year 12 and the large majority continues into Year 13. Students are well motivated, working with enthusiasm and personal commitment. Students work in lessons with enjoyment and contribute positively during discussion based activities. This contributes towards them achieving well. In Year 12, they draw effectively on precise subject terminology when working on definitions of word formation and the identification of supporting examples. In Year 13, students identify complex linguistic features and successfully apply their understanding to a range of forms of speech.

Teaching and learning

114. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and a thorough appreciation of assessment criteria and examination technique. These strong features are shared explicitly with students through setting and reviewing clear learning objectives. All lessons featured opportunities for paired and group talk, but some students needed more time and guidance in order to formulate and sustain extended responses. Students' work is discussed with them on an individual basis to focus on assessment criteria and to negotiate the appropriate choice of coursework assignments. Teachers produce very good resources and reference materials to structure students' preparation for lessons and to guide their revision programmes. These resources enable students to develop the greater levels of independence in learning which teachers are keen to promote.

Leadership and management

115. Good course organisation and planning support the development of students' skills and understanding. Well-established learning outcomes have been agreed with all staff leading to a consistency of approach. Self-evaluation is developing very well and focuses on raising standards. Improved results have arisen from good planning, teaching and well-motivated students. Since the last inspection, significantly higher numbers choose the subject and standards have risen.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

116. Students' good competence in using their language and literacy skills supports well their achievement in the other subjects they study.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A well-planned teaching programme identifies areas of weakness, but its implementation is not sufficiently monitored
- Students' motivation and learning are well supported by the effective use of the language assistant and an exchange programme
- Students' attitudes are good, but the poorer attitudes of a few restricts their achievement
- The development of students' speaking and listening skills are not effectively promoted when English is used too frequently as the means of communication

Commentary

Examination results

117. Results in 2003 were average, having fallen from well above average the previous year. All the candidates were girls. No candidate gained the highest grade.

Standards and achievement

118. In lessons, some Year 12 students displayed considerable gaps in their knowledge of basic grammar and vocabulary, although most coursework fulfilled examination requirements. Most Year 12 students speak well and with good accents, but a few are very hesitant when speaking. In general, speaking is a less developed skill in both Years 12 and 13. Year 13 students produce good written and spoken work within the context of the A-level syllabus. Students make satisfactory progress from Year 12 to 13 in terms of vocabulary and grammar acquisition, and the development of communication skills.

Teaching and learning

119. Teachers are good linguists and share their skills with students. Teaching is carefully structured and designed to help students make good progress by focusing clearly on identified areas in need of development. On occasions, however, there was insufficient structure to support oral and written work when students did not have enough opportunity to work independently or to

personalise the new language through creative role play. The attitude of some students, who had failed to complete a homework assignment and did not fully participate in oral work, had an adverse effect on their achievement. English was used too frequently as the means of communication thus restricting the development of students' speaking and listening skills. The effective deployment of the foreign language assistant outside lessons contributes to students' achievement.

Leadership and management

120. The planned teaching programme is good and the vision for the subject is clear, but teaching is not sufficiently monitored to ensure that plans are put into effect consistently in the classroom. The French exchange has a positive impact on motivation and standards. Standards, until the drop last year, have been maintained since the time of the last report and accommodation and resources have improved.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good level of teachers' knowledge leads to clear explanations of concepts
- Opportunities are missed for students to develop their independent study skills
- Good diagnostic marking guides students on how to improve
- The use of ICT in the teaching and learning of mathematics is embryonic

Commentary

Examination results

121. In 2003, the results at A-level were above average as they were last year. Boys significantly outperformed girls.

Standards and achievement

122. Students have a good understanding of mathematics and make effective use of previous work when introduced to a new topic. Year 12 students can calculate and interpret the product-moment correlation co-efficient and understand the limitations of its use. Those in Year 13 calculate co-ordinate region areas as well as understand tangents to curves expressed in polar co-ordinates. Overall, students are achieving well.

Teaching and learning

123. The quality of teaching in the lessons observed was good, overall. Students' recorded work indicates that teaching is effective in raising their achievement. Teachers give good, clear explanations so that students improve their understanding and achieve well. Students respond well to questions, they volunteer suggestions, articulating their points well, and participate freely in discussions. Lessons proceed at a brisk pace and are planned well, allowing students to build on each stage of new learning before progressing to the next. Homework is set regularly to consolidate and extend effectively new work introduced in the lesson. However, the students are not

encouraged to research independently for topics in advance of their lessons or to demonstrate their understanding to the rest of the group. Higher-attaining students are not always sufficiently challenged in lessons and lower-attaining students do not always receive clear, targeted support in order to achieve their potential. Students' work is marked well, weaknesses or errors are identified and students given good guidance on how to improve.

Leadership and management

124. The head of department is a good role model and has a clear vision to raise standards within the department. Teachers work well together and give students good support by providing tuition out of lessons when required. The planned teaching programme is comprehensive in its coverage but does not give sufficient guidance on teaching methods and resources so that, for example ICT is used insufficiently in lessons. Good procedures are in place for assessing students' attainment as they move through the course, but the use of this information to track a student's progress is underdeveloped. Good departmental self-evaluation is leading to rising standards and moving the department forward. Students find the transition between GCSE and AS level difficult; the teaching and learning styles are different and consequently learning suffers in the initial months. The piloting of bridging materials has gone some way to overcoming this problem.

Mathematics across the curriculum

125. Satisfactory use is made of mathematics across the curriculum, the standards of which are well above average. For example, Year 12 business studies students calculate a price index and convert prices across the years and students use and apply formulae very well in physics and chemistry.

SCIENCE

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Biology is a popular subject and students are very positive in their attitudes to biology
- Good innovations are being developed in teaching which engage students' interest and enthusiasm
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory because there are too few laboratories
- Teaching is inconsistent because the best practice has not yet been shared effectively

Commentary

Examination results

126. Results in 2003 were well above average, having been very high in the previous year. Girls outperformed boys.

Standards and achievement

127. Attainment on entry to the subject is well above average - students in both years having an average attainment between grades A and B. However, it is to the credit of the department that students are accepted with C grades either in biology or double award science. In maintaining standards at an above average level, students are achieving well. The work seen in the school was above average, except in certain practical skills which were average, although much of the work consisted of well-kept notes and could have been more challenging. The school reasonably anticipates that the previous high results will be maintained by the time that students are ready for their examinations.

Teaching and Learning

128. The department is following a good initiative to develop active learning through independent information processing. This can be seen in various strategies that teachers use, such as the emphasis on unpicking text and the use of learning games. However, teachers vary in their ability to listen to students. This is reflected in student opinion. While most students are very satisfied with the subject and know how well they are performing, a few feel that they are lectured too much and that their teacher does not know how well they are coping with the information. Teachers do not make sufficient use of ICT, presentations by students, and detailed writing in a range of genres to allow greater challenge in independent learning.

Leadership and management

129. The four teachers who contribute to post-16 biology teaching make a good team with complementary skills. However, strengths in the teaching have not yet been shared effectively by all the team. In particular, tracking achievement from the students' attainment on entry to their day-to-day and final performance, and a more consistent overview of their notes and of the assessments that they should be undergoing on a regular basis. Progress since the last inspection in teaching and learning has been good.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Insufficient details in the previous report

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Knowledgeable teachers give lessons which are brisk and interesting and which engage students' involvement
- Students have very good attitudes to their studies so they are attentive in lessons and work hard
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory because there are too few laboratories and the preparation areas are too small
- Teachers assess work regularly and support independent learning well, but do not use the information sufficiently to set appropriate, subject-specific targets for improvement

Commentary

Examination results

130. In 2003, results were above average, having been well above average the previous year. Students had a 100 per cent pass rate in 2003 and boys' performance was better than girls'.

Standards and achievement

131. Standards seen during the inspection were above average and may be expected to rise further after rigorous preparation for examinations. Year 13 students are achieving well in relation to their GCSE performance. Students' skill in mathematics is well above average so they perform chemistry calculations readily and accurately, such as those involving equilibrium constants. They have a good knowledge and understanding of chemistry, for example of the main organic routes and the conditions needed to convert one organic compound to another.

Teaching and learning

132. Lessons usually have a brisk start with an activity to engage students quickly, such as drawing a flow diagram to produce chlorophenylamine from benzene. Teachers have very good command of their subject so they can explain clearly the complex ideas of chemistry. Lessons usually include more than one activity to maintain student interest and motivation, but sometimes the activities lack variety and the stimulus material is dull. Reviewing the lesson at the end is sometimes rushed and does not involve all students so that a good assessment of the learning that has gone on cannot be made. Teaching is impaired by having too little time in laboratories so that students develop their experimental skills more slowly. Insufficient use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning in lessons.

133. Students settle to their work quickly, stay on task throughout their lessons and complete assignments well. They support one another well when working in groups or discussing ideas. As part of the developing culture of independent learning, students are constructing their own notes; a task they generally do well. They are well supported by departmentally-produced course booklets that contain the points students should include, page references and questions to test comprehension. Teachers regularly check these notes for accuracy and completeness but comments, to provide guidance for improvement, are too infrequent. Students' progress is regularly assessed through a wide range of tests. For example, in Year 12 students complete a series of multiple choice tests on a departmental website and get instant feedback on their performance. However, students do not record their scores well and so lack an overview of their progress. The department has produced suitable self-assessment sheets for students to analyse their own test performance and set themselves targets to improve. However, because teachers do not check them, students do not use them effectively.

Leadership and management

134. Day to day, the department runs efficiently. Effective support is given to new teachers by having them share groups with more experienced colleagues. A wealth of paper resources is produced to support independent learning by students well and to provide suitable assessment material. However, monitoring of teaching lacks sufficient rigour to ensure that best practice is followed throughout the department. Students' test scores provide a lot of data to inform teachers of their progress, but it is not used well to set them targets for improvement based on specific learning goals. Technicians provide good support for lessons despite their cramped working conditions.

Physics

Provision in physics is **good**.

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching offers clear explanations and teachers respond quickly and accurately to students' questions
- Overall, students have very good attitudes to their studies so they are attentive in lessons and complete assignments well
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory because there are too few laboratories and the preparation areas are too small
- Teachers assess work regularly and make useful comments so that students can improve their performance

Commentary

Examination results

135. In 2003, results were well above average as they had been the previous year. Boys outperformed girls.

Standards and achievement

136. Standards seen during the inspection were above average but should rise further after rigorous preparation for examinations. By Year 13, students are achieving well in relation to their GCSE performance. Experimental skills are well developed and students' competence in mathematics is well above average, enabling them to cope well with calculations and analyses of data from their experiments. This is in spite of the fact that groups are often taught in non-specialist rooms, which reduces the time for experimental work and for teachers to set up rooms adequately for prompt lesson starts.

Teaching and learning

137. Teachers have very good subject knowledge so they can respond quickly and accurately to students' queries and offer clear explanations of physics concepts. The department has the expertise to support students well in meeting the criteria for coursework set by the examination board. Lessons have suitable activities to meet lesson objectives but sometimes the stimulus material is uninspiring. Some starters do not grab students' imagination and final sessions are not always used effectively to assess the learning that has gone on. Insufficient use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning. Students join in lesson activities willingly and remain on task well. They give good support to one another when working in groups or discussing ideas. Students are encouraged to become independent learners and generate their own notes from lessons and textbooks. Teachers regularly check these notes for accuracy and completeness. Tests are frequently used to measure students' knowledge and understanding and suitable steps are taken to maintain a good work ethic, such as contacting home, when students under-perform. However, students do not maintain records of their own progress very well so they lose focus on how well they are doing. There is inconsistency in the way different teachers try to support this, resulting in little improvement in this area.

Leadership and management

138. The department runs efficiently. Through effective teamwork, ideas for lesson activities and paper resources are always shared. Monitoring of teaching, although regular, does not generate sufficiently sharp targets for teachers to improve the structure of their lessons. Setting targets for students to improve their performance is not well developed in Year 12 - students are not aware of the minimum they can be expected to achieve. The process has greater impact in Year 13 where it is based upon AS-level results. Experienced technicians provide good support to teaching and learning despite their cramped working conditions. The curriculum is enriched through trips to physics conferences, entering national physics competitions and by giving students a choice of modules to study in Year 13.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **very good**.

	Year 13
Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths

- Teaching strategies which develop students' intellectual ability through problem solving and critical thinking
- Energetic teaching which develops the key skills for examination success very well
- The commitment of the students, which results in them working very hard, is an important contribution to their achievement
- Students know exactly what they need to do to improve their work

Commentary

Examination results

139. This is a new subject which has yet to be examined.

Standards and achievement

140. Lesson observation and the scrutiny of students' recorded work show that standards are well above average. The main factors contributing to this very good achievement are very good, often excellent teaching, and the students' excellent attitudes to their learning. In studying bias, conformity and stereotypical behaviour, students carried out an interactive self-assessment of their own prejudice on the Internet. This very effective use of ICT had a significant positive impact on students' learning, and on their understanding of psychological processes and behaviour modification techniques. They used their understanding to plan a lesson to reduce prejudice in a situation in which it was rife. Students offer evidence from their own reading, which inspection of their notes shows is very wide, and introduce ideas from their own experience to exemplify and support, or to challenge points being made in the teaching or by their peers.

Teaching and learning

141. Teachers have very good subject knowledge which they use very well in energetic and direct teaching. Excellent planning results in lessons which use strategies encouraging lateral thinking and problem solving which are well matched to students' intellectual capacity. Teachers use questioning

very well to help students develop habits of reflective and critical thinking. Ethical considerations in carrying out psychological experiments feature strongly in the teaching. The work students are given very effectively promotes the development of key skills, such as analysis and evaluation of data, and examination and coursework techniques. Very good assessment includes helpful feedback on students' written and oral work, so that they know exactly what they must do to improve. Teaching and learning are well supported by very good use of ICT.

142. Students say they very much enjoy psychology. Their excellent attitude to learning is very evident, and they often act as a learning resource for each other. They are self-directed learners, consistently work close to capacity, and achieve and maintain comprehensive gains in learning.

Leadership and management

143. Leadership of the subject, in terms of designing and teaching a psychology scheme of work, creating the learning environment, and focusing on high achievement, is very good. The school is aware of the need, as it extends the provision of psychology to larger numbers, to ensure the availability of specialist teaching in the subject for all students in order to maintain and enhance standards. It is also aware that, as numbers grow, it needs to develop appropriate teaching strategies to match a more diverse range of learning needs.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Computing

Provision in computing is **good**.

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and learning	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Difficult concepts are taught well using a mix of effective strategies
- Students are very well motivated and work hard on programming activities
- Well-supervised coursework is of a good quality
- Students and staff have a good understanding of how well students are doing, but recording of progress is too informal

Commentary

Examination results

144. Results were above average for several years up to 2001. Results were slightly lower in 2002, but with no data available to enable comparison with national results, and improved in 2003.

Standards and achievement

145. Current standards in Year 13 are above average. Students' coursework is of good quality. They analyse real problems and produce well-documented solutions, for example setting up a web-based bus route and timetable planner for the local bus company. Good teaching and students' hard work result in good achievement.

Teaching and learning

146. Teachers teach difficult concepts well. For example, a very good mix of university style lecturing and tutorial discussion ensured that students quickly learned how to set up, add to and delete data from a structure called a “linked list”. In the follow up programming session, high-quality discussions between themselves and with the teacher enabled students to resolve technical difficulties quickly and to make good progress in developing the associated computer programs. Relationships between students and staff are very good, and the students themselves are very well motivated. Year 12 students, for instance revel in the technical programming challenges required in their coursework, and work hard at correcting errors in the database management systems they set up.

147. Students organise the time they spend on developing coursework well, generally keeping to the tight schedules imposed, and their efforts contribute well to their own learning. Teachers supervise coursework closely, and because groups are small, they get to know students well. Adherence to tight schedules ensures that learning is brisk, and because students are given copies of the syllabus and coursework assessment criteria, both they and teachers have a good understanding of how well they are progressing. However, assessments are formally recorded only at the end of the work and there are no records of progress so far in the theoretical parts of the course.

Leadership and management

148. Leadership and management are good but informal because the number of staff teaching the course is small and teaching groups are also small. The two teachers plan well together, and supervise coursework closely. Focusing mainly on the practical coursework elements in the first term works well.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

149. Students make good use of ICT in the sixth form. However, except for a few subjects, most of the good work is done at home because of the lack of any dedicated ICT facilities for sixth form students. This is a barrier to learning as students cannot get access to the Internet, for example when they have independent study periods. Students make very good use of ICT in product design food technology and resistant materials for presentation, analysis and computer-aided manufacturing. Psychology students made excellent use of ICT with on-line learning materials evaluating prejudice.

HUMANITIES

History was the focus subject in this area, but lessons in geography and religious education were sampled.

Results in **geography** in both 2002 and 2003 were very high. A very good lesson was observed in which students learned very well, making major gains in understanding of development issues related to grants to India for growing genetically modified crops. This resulted from very good teaching based on very effective planning and the teacher taking the role of expert witness. Achievement was very good enabling students to reach standards that were well above average.

In **religious studies**, results in 2003 were below average having fallen from average the previous year. In the lesson observed, achievement, teaching and learning were very good and standards well above average. This was because very good teaching enabled students to summarise and discuss philosophical theories and apply them to ethical issues very clearly.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

	Year 13
Standards	High
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Improvement since the previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good because students respond very well to stimulating teaching
- Students have a mature and committed approach to the subject and are very keen to take responsibility for their own learning
- Well-structured courses give all students very good opportunities to acquire high-level skills that they use extremely well in examination conditions
- Questioning and discussion is sometimes too teacher directed

Commentary

Examination results

150. In both 2002 and 2003, examination results were very high.

Standards and achievement

151. Current standards in Years 12 and 13 are high. Achievement is very good and many students are exceeding their predicted grades. Students make particularly good progress in using a very complex range of historical information to analyse and evaluate historical situations and source materials. This is particularly strong in their work on post-revolutionary Russia. Students' extended written answers are of high quality, a skill which develops considerably as they progress from Year 12 to 13. The extremely mature approach to their studies is a major factor in the high standards attained. This is an extremely challenging course and provides students with opportunities to enhance greatly their history skills.

Teaching and learning

152. Teachers have very good subject knowledge which they use to give very clear explanations. This gives confidence to all students, but particularly those who find the subject challenging. Teachers plan lessons very well and make very good use of questioning and discussion. Students make good progress in response to searching questioning and learn extremely well through collaborative discussion, as was seen in Year 13 work on the economic challenges facing Mussolini. Students say that they find the very challenging quality of discussion is a stimulating aspect of the course. Teachers use source material very well. Students are helped to interpret, analyse and evaluate at a very high level through this. Their written work is marked regularly and their progress is well recorded. This has a very strong impact on students' achievement. The standard of the essay writing of nearly all students shows considerable development as the course progresses. Teachers give very good support to individuals and students say they are very clear as to how they can raise their marks. They agree very clear targets with their teachers and are extremely well motivated. In all sessions, they not only support one another extremely well, but also strive extremely hard in a friendly competitive spirit. Lessons are occasionally too teacher dominated. Students say they are sometimes stopped when they want to lead discussions into new areas. They like to lead debates and present their research to their fellow students and say they have particularly enjoyed doing so when given the opportunity.

Leadership and management

153. The very clear commitment to maintaining the highest standards is supported by very good planning. Systems ensure students have all the necessary support to achieve according to their capabilities. Teachers know students' strengths and weaknesses very well. Schemes of work are very detailed, providing very good guidance to teachers so they can respond to the needs of students.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

The department offers product design courses in textiles, graphics and resistant materials, and food technology. The resistant materials course was the focus in this area; it is taught together with the graphics product design course. Lessons were sampled in the textiles course and in food technology and in graphics.

The results of all the courses are aggregated to provide national comparisons. Results in 2002 and 2003 were very high. The performance of boys was a little higher than that of girls.

In **food technology**, students are always encouraged to use ICT in their work and this results in outstanding coursework. In the lesson seen, students' excellent attitudes contributed to very good learning and achievement. Teaching was very good and focused strongly on ensuring students were on track for top grades and working in an atmosphere of being 'real' food technologists trying to redesign an existing flour-based product. Standards were very high.

In the **textiles** lesson seen, teaching, learning and achievement were satisfactory. Standards were as expected. Students were very well motivated and provided with much information about automated production of clothing but not given enough opportunities for independent work and development of key skills, such as collaborative research and presentation using ICT software.

In the observed **graphics** lesson, students were engaged in a wide range of designing projects ranging from marketing and promotional themes to a very ambitious and challenging architectural project. Standards were no more than average at this stage because computers were not being used enough to speed-up work and improve presentation. Teaching was satisfactory.

Product design: resistant materials

Provision in product design: resistant materials is **satisfactory**.

	Year 13
Standards	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Improvement since the previous inspection	Insufficient details in last report

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well when getting to grips with the new machinery
- Good support materials have been developed, but industrial visits and links are not planned into the teaching which limits the learning experience
- Only a few students take this course and do not have easy access to equipment in year 13
- Students show commitment to their work and return after school to make further progress

Commentary

Examination results

154. Too few students followed the course to make any national comparisons in 2003. Those that took the subject did well. Too few students have followed the course in previous years to be able to determine any trend.

Standards and achievement

155. Students have made very good use of computer-aided design to illustrate and render technical views of their products. Those who have made very good use of software have produced very good concept designs and exploded views showing the fitting of individual parts. The design work of those who have not made sufficient use of computers, lacks a professional final appearance. The weakness in the application of designing skills, mentioned in the last report, still remains. Students are not as far advanced as expected at this point in the course because the deadline they have is vague and students are not managed tightly enough to ensure that they are up to date.

156. Practical work is progressing better and students enjoy making their ideas, using equipment with confidence. They did not always take the best approaches, and needed closer monitoring to overcome avoidable problems. Students who have chosen to incorporate the use of new computer manufacturing equipment, for example by using CAM milling equipment to recess the body of an electric guitar to take the electronic components and controls, have achieved well. Students have not had the benefit of industrial visits in this course and this limits their knowledge of industrial processes, one of the examination study areas.

Teaching and learning

157. In Year 12, teaching emphasises well the differences between GCSE and AS-level so that students recognise, for example the importance of quality control and assurance in manufacturing. Good support materials, including access to electronic reference resources, give students a good structure to organise their ideas. Not all lessons start as crisply as they could with objectives and a briefing of what needs to be achieved.

158. Year 13 lessons are not timetabled into a workshop because younger students are using the facilities. This inhibits progress of the older students who are sometimes restricted in sharing equipment in these lessons. Despite this, students maintain very positive attitudes and relationships with the teaching team, and invest extra time at the end of the school day to gain access to machinery. The essential feedback, provided by a real client link with the students, is not organised at an early enough stage to enable a dialogue to be established as ideas progress. Many students have organised links themselves, but this is a variable experience with no coordination as to what needs to be learnt.

Leadership and management

159. The leadership is committed and, through moderation work with an examination organisation, a wider perspective of standards is being gained. This is enabling improvements to be made. Some areas of the course are still too teacher directed, therefore missing opportunities to make the work more interesting by practical activity-based learning.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Lessons in art and music were sampled in this curriculum area.

In **art**, results in 2002 were very high. Too few students took the examination in 2003 for reliable comparisons to be made, but all passed with at least a grade C. Two lessons were seen. In both, students were achieving very well at standards well above average because teaching fostered a self-critical and analytical approach to independent work. They learned very well as a result of very good exploration of techniques and media.

The two **music** students in 2003 were successful. In the sampled lesson, the quality of teaching and learning was excellent and students achieved exceptionally well to reach high standards. This was because teaching involved very clear explanations so students gained the knowledge to be able to recognise suspensions and apply them in their own harmonic progressions.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

A **sports studies** lesson was observed in this area. Results in 2002 were average and showed a similar pattern in 2003. In the lesson seen, teaching, learning and achievement were good, with good use of ICT in the presentation and use of material to enable students to make good comparisons about sport in different countries. Standards were average.

BUSINESS

Business studies

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

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Improvement since the previous inspection	This is a new course

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching effectively prepares students for examination success
- Constructive guidance and feedback are given on students' work, enabling them to make very good progress
- Relationships between the teacher and students are very productive.
- Frequent reference to 'real-world' situations helps students to make sense of the theory, but they have no opportunities to see the subject first-hand in its 'real-world' context
- Too little use is made of ICT to support teaching

Commentary

Examination results

160. In 2003, results were very high, an improvement on the already well-above average results in the previous year. Boys outperformed girls.

Standards and achievement

161. Students begin Year 12 with no previous experience of learning in the subject and no clear understanding of what the subject involves. Some students are steered into taking it because their GCSE results preclude them from taking other subjects and so standards on entry to the course are below average for the school. While students make very good progress during Year 12, the time is insufficient to develop the depth of understanding needed for many to gain the highest grades. During Year 13, depth of understanding increases so that students improve their performance dramatically. Students achieve very well due to a clear focus on assessment requirements and a strong emphasis on the real world nature of the subject.

Teaching and learning

162. The focus on examination requirements leads to good preparation for the examination, while frequent links to the real world of business and the economy enable students to make sense of theory. The course is planned very well. Students know exactly what they should be doing each week and the overview gives them confidence in their progress. Lessons seen were either good or very good, and always well planned so that learning built sequentially. Learning was most effective, in those lessons with a good mix of teacher led discussion and student individual activity. Students were given opportunities to apply their new learning in tasks that were directly relevant to the examination, such as converting historic sales data to constant prices to see the effects of inflation. Where learning was sometimes less effective, the lesson was too dominated by the teacher.

163. Very good relationships create a productive environment for learning, and students have a high regard for staff. The expertise and experience of teachers and their teaching are valued very highly. Students greatly appreciate the concern shown for their individual progress. Good marking, assessment and feedback inform students very well on their progress and how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

164. Very experienced leadership and management of the subject bring a business background to the provision. Well-established leadership has a clear drive for improvement with self-critical review and evaluation. Target setting and monitoring of student progress is well established, with regular review and change to take account of changing circumstances.

165. Potential students are not well informed about the demands of the course when making choices. Students do not currently have opportunity to participate in appropriate visits to see business in action or to apply business learning in contexts such as Young Enterprise. Too little use is made of ICT to support teaching and learning.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

The school does not offer a course in this curriculum area.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

All students follow a general studies course and in 2003 results were **well above average**, as they had been the previous year. Girls outperformed boys. No lesson was observed because none was on the timetable for the period of the inspection.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	2	2
How inclusive the school is		2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	2	2
Overall standards achieved		3
Students' achievement	3	3
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		1
Attendance	2	1
Attitudes	1	1
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1	1
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		1
The quality of education provided by the school		3
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	2	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	3	3
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for students	2	2
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	4	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	3
The leadership and management of the school		2
The governance of the school	3	3
The leadership of the headteacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	2	2
The effectiveness of management	3	3

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