

INSPECTION REPORT

ADAMS' GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Newport

LEA area: Telford and Wrekin

Unique reference number: 123593

Headteacher: Mr J M Richardson

Lead inspector: A Briggs

Dates of inspection: 2nd – 6th February 2004

Inspection number: 259296

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

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Terms used in this report

*Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 are at **Key Stage 3**, having transferred in most cases from their primary schools after Year 6. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are at **Key Stage 4** of their education. Those pupils who remain at school after the compulsory period of education are in the **sixth form**, in Years 12 and 13. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 follow courses and Programmes of Study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for all ages at school.*

*At the end of Year 9, pupils aged 14 take national tests in English, mathematics and science. In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the pupils know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Year 11, pupils aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**). Sixth form students may take further courses leading to the General Certificate of Education at Advanced level (**A-level**). Students may take examinations leading to the Advanced Subsidiary award (**AS**), equivalent to half the difficulty of the full A-level, which is gained by further study beyond AS standard.*

*Inspectors judge the **standards** reached by pupils by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for pupils of the same age nationally. The judgements about pupils' **achievements** reflect whether they are doing well enough. These judgements take account of the educational **value added** over time. In this report, similar schools are defined as those having similar standards at the start of each stage of learning. Tables of national comparisons for selective secondary schools were not available at the time of this inspection so similar school comparisons, for example with Year 9 national tests, are with schools where the intake into Year 7 reflected a similar level of attainment. The term 'very high' when used to describe standards or results means in the top five per cent of schools nationally and is represented by A* in the tables shown within the text of this report.*

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Selective grammar
School category:	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	11-16 Boys. Mixed sixth form
Number on roll:	768
School address:	Newport Shropshire
Postcode:	TF10 7BD
Telephone number:	01952 810698
Fax number:	01952 812696
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Bruce Powell
Date of previous inspection:	9 th March 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Adams' Grammar School is smaller than most secondary schools. It is a popular and oversubscribed voluntary aided, selective day and boarding school for boys aged 11 to 18. Some boys and approximately 50 girls from a very wide area join its sixth form from other schools. It is a Haberdashers' Company School. The school seeks to educate the top 25 per cent of the population by academic ability. The attainment of pupils coming into Year 7, as shown by their end of Year 6 national tests in English, mathematics and science, is well above average. Their attainment in other subjects ranges from well above average to average. They come from areas which, overall, are favoured in social and economic measures compared to the national average. The pupil population is very stable with very few leaving or joining part way through the year. Few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The percentage for which English is not the mother tongue is above average but very few are at the early stages of learning English. A much smaller than average proportion of pupils have identified special educational needs.

The school achieved Technology College status in 1996. It has been awarded the Schools Achievement award for the last three years as well as the Sportsmark Gold, International Schools Award and Careers Awards and Investors in People. It is involved in many local initiatives including: Combined Cadet Force, Young Enterprise, and the Duke of Edinburgh Award. There are two sites more than a mile apart but one is used predominantly for boarding.

Virtually all pupils continue in education Post-16, the large majority at the school. It is a similar picture at the end of Year 13 with nearly all continuing into higher education. Students join the sixth form to follow traditional A-level courses. Hardly any students leave the sixth form at the end of Year 12. Their attainment is above the average attainment of students entering sixth forms.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
15208	A Briggs	Lead inspector	
9053	V Phillips	Lay inspector	
28199	P Lawley	Team inspector	English; sixth form English; English as an additional language
18178	I Matthews	Team inspector	Mathematics; sixth form mathematics
32777	J McVeigh	Team inspector	Science; sixth form biology
32367	J Pike	Team inspector	Art and citizenship
15163	E Deeson	Team inspector	Design and technology; sixth form design and technology
33645	S Oliver	Team inspector	Geography
33150	A Pilgrim	Team inspector	History; sixth form geography
32785	W Allt	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT); sixth form ICT
22953	P Dacombe	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages; sixth form French and German
11746	R Coulthard	Team inspector	Music
30800	B Colley	Team inspector	Physical education; sixth form physical education; Special educational needs
30749	H Boyle	Team inspector	Religious education
4922	M Driver	Team inspector	Sixth form chemistry and physics
33018	A Read	Team inspector	Boarding provision

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Adams' Grammar School is a very good school providing very good value for money. Pupils reach very high standards, in the top five per cent of schools nationally. Teaching and learning are very good with much that is excellent; they are strongest in the sixth form. Pupils' achievement is very good as they maintain and improve very high standards through the school. Pupils' attitudes are outstanding. The boarding provision is very good. Leadership and management are, overall, very good in the main school and in the sixth form. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- The consistently very high standards are above average for similar schools and rising
- Pupils achieve very well in nearly all subjects because of the very good teaching they receive
- The school is very well led and managed with a strong focus on improving standards
- Pupils underachieve in Years 7 to 9 in music because of unsatisfactory teaching and management
- Pupils' attitudes are excellent; there is a strong work ethic and they are extremely keen to learn
- Monitoring and evaluating of classroom practice is not rigorous enough to ensure new ideas are taken on board
- Whilst some accommodation is very good, some subjects have to cope with restrictions of space and quality, which impact on the range of experiences pupils can benefit from. Most staff are very successful in minimising the effect of these shortcomings

Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Very high standards have been maintained with significant increases in the highest grades over the last two years. Most issues raised by the last inspection have been tackled successfully. Weaknesses remain in the co-ordination of ICT across the curriculum as well as the facilities for music and art.

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*	n/a	

Key: A - very high; 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.*

Pupils' standards when they come to the school are well above average. **Their achievement overall is very good as they improve on these standards.** In Year 9, results in 2003 were very high for English, mathematics and science. Significantly fewer pupils reach the higher National Curriculum levels in English than in mathematics and science. Current standards in Year 9 are very high and pupils achieve very well overall except in music. Current standards in Year 11 are very high in nearly all subjects, reflecting the 2003 GCSE results, and achievement is very good. Standards of literacy and numeracy are very high. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs and of the very highest attainers and talented pupils is very good. Very few pupils are at the early stages of learning English. Nevertheless, those pupils who need it are provided with a very good quality of support and so make rapid progress. Year 13 results in 2003 were better than in 2002; boys and girls achieved similarly. Current standards are very high and students are achieving very well.

Pupils' personal qualities and their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are excellent. Pupils' outstanding attitudes to learning make a significant contribution to their achievement. Excellent behaviour in lessons and around the school creates an environment that is superb for learning. Attendance is very good and enhances pupils' learning and achievement.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a very good quality of education.

Teaching, overall, is very good with much that is excellent. In the best lessons, teaching is imaginative and exciting and actively engages the pupils in their own learning. This approach is not consistent throughout the school. Teaching in religious education is excellent and pupils achieve extremely well. Teaching in music in Years 7 to 9 is unsatisfactory so pupils do not learn well and standards are not high enough. In the sixth form, teaching in the subjects inspected in detail is very good or better in most and good in design and technology and German. Overall, therefore, pupils are learning and achieving very well. Assessment is very good and used very effectively in most departments.

Overall, the curriculum is good and meets the needs of pupils and students well. Extra-curricular activities support subject learning extremely well and provide many excellent sporting opportunities. This really helps to raise standards. The provision for the arts is much weaker. The school has sufficient resources, a very good match of teachers to the curriculum and, with the exception of art, music and science, adequate accommodation. The care that the school provides for its pupils is very good. They receive excellent support and guidance from their teachers. The house system is a particular strength. The very good partnerships between the school and parents, the community the school serves, and the other schools with which it is linked, all make an extremely positive contribution to pupils' learning and their achievement.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The quality of leadership and management is very good. The leadership of the headteacher is outstanding. The leadership of other key staff is very good throughout the school. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis but some issues such as monitoring teaching and learning have not been tackled with sufficient rigour. Governors have an excellent grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are outstanding in their support and commitment. Governance is judged very good overall as full compliance with requirements for a collective act of worship has not proved possible, despite considerable efforts, and measures to check that pupils receive full curriculum entitlement in music and ICT are not completely in place. The sixth form is very well led and managed.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents' views are very positive. They are extremely interested in pupils' learning and are keen for them to do as well as possible. Their high aspirations influence their children, who come to school expecting to learn well and to work very hard. In their questionnaire responses, they highlight as strengths of the school good teaching, good progress, high expectations, fair treatment, and communication, such as the exceptionally clear written reports. They have some concern over the extent to which the school seeks their views with regard to improving facilities and provision. Pupils were very positive about their school. They felt that it was a very good school to be at, they were taught well and they were expected to work very hard.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are

- Tackle, as a matter of urgency, the unsatisfactory provision for music and the status attached to arts provision in general
- Monitor the quality of teaching and learning more rigorously to ensure new ideas and initiatives are used to bring teaching strategies up to date and make lessons more interesting
- Work to overcome shortcomings in accommodation for music, art and science

and, to meet statutory requirements

- Ensure that National Curriculum requirements are covered for music in Years 7 to 9 and ICT in Years 10 and 11
- Provide a daily act of collective worship

THE SIXTH FORM AT ADAMS' GRAMMAR SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

The effectiveness of the sixth form is very good and it is very cost-effective. A wide curriculum choice provides well for the needs and aspirations of the students. They are very well taught and this, together with their excellent attitudes to learning, helps them achieve very well. Examination results are significantly above average and are improving. The sixth form is very well led and managed.

The main strengths are

- Students achieve very well because of the very good teaching they receive
- Students' attitudes are outstanding which supports their achievement really well
- Examination results overall are very high and have risen significantly since the previous inspection report
- Students receive excellent guidance and support and the school makes every effort to seek and value their views
- An outstanding range of extra curricular activities enriches the subject curriculum

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	Very good in English literature and French Good in German
Mathematics	Very good
Science	Very good in biology, chemistry and physics
Information and communication technology	Very good
Humanities	Very good in geography
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Very good in design and technology
Visual and performing arts and media	There was no focus subject in this area
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Excellent in physical education because the subject is excellently led and students benefit from outstanding extra-curricular provision and very good facilities which help support and extend learning.
Business	There was no focus subject in this area
Health and social care	There was no focus subject in this area
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'.

All other subjects were sampled, including the general studies programme. Students were achieving well or very well in almost all the lessons seen.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

The school gives **excellent** support and guidance to students in the sixth form, and has excellent procedures for seeking out and acting on their views. Students know they can get advice on any issue. **Very good** advice is given to students on careers, and on further or higher education. Their work is assessed rigorously and very good use is made of the information.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The very good leadership in the sixth form has ensured very effective delegation of duties and a shared desire to build on success and improve even further. This has led to very good achievement and good progress since the last inspection. **The very effective management** of house tutors supports students exceedingly well and makes a significant contribution to their excellent attitudes to study and their personal development. The monitoring of students' performance is particularly strong. Governors have a good grasp of issues relating to the sixth form.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students have a very positive view of the school. Responses to a questionnaire indicate that they enjoy being students, they believe they are well taught by expert staff who are easily accessible, their work is assessed thoroughly and they are helped to study independently. A particular strength was the level of support boarders receive in their study time. Students felt their courses suited their ability and career plans. They also say that everyone receives good information and advice on careers and university courses. Although responses from a significant minority of sixth formers indicated they did not feel there was an adult in the school who knows them well, this view was not supported by discussions with students.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

The vast majority of pupils join the school in Year 7 with standards of attainment that are well above average and by the time they leave Year 11 their standards are **very high**; pupils achieve very well. A significant number of students attain results at the highest possible level. Standards in English, mathematics and science are significantly **above average**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in national testing at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were very high
- GCSE results in 2003 were also very high and above average for similar schools
- Pupils achieve very well throughout the school because of the very good teaching they receive
- The achievement of pupils with special educational needs and those that are particularly gifted or talented is very good overall
- Pupils underachieve in Years 7 to 9 in music because of unsatisfactory teaching
- Pupils are very articulate and extremely confident speakers

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	40 (39)	33 (33)
Mathematics	48 (47)	35 (35)
Science	44 (45)	34 (33)

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

Commentary

1. Results in the end of Year 9 national testing in 2003 were in the top five per cent of schools nationally when compared to the national average, as they had been the previous year. Results in science fell slightly while those in mathematics rose. However, science results are strongest overall while those in English are weakest. Significantly fewer pupils reach the higher levels in English than in mathematics and science. In comparison with similar grammar schools, that is schools whose pupils gained similar end of Year 6 test results, results in mathematics and science were well above average and in English were below average. Overall they were above average. The school met the targets that it had set for the proportion of pupils reaching National Curriculum Level 6 in each of these subjects. The trend in results over the last five years is above the national trend.
2. The standards seen in Year 9 were well above average in mathematics, history, ICT and physical education. In citizenship they are above average. Standards were very high in all other subjects with the exception of music where they were below average. Pupils achieve excellently in religious education and very well in most other subjects with the exception of English, ICT and history where achievement is good and music where it is unsatisfactory. Pupils only achieve satisfactorily in citizenship because the recently improved teaching has yet to have full effect.
3. Pupils achieve very well in Years 7 to 9 because of the very good teaching they receive. Pupils' excellent attitudes also make a significant contribution to their achievement. It is the consistency of pupils achieving very well, particularly in science that enables them to attain very high standards. Pupils underachieve in music in Years 7 to 9 because teaching and management are unsatisfactory and have been for some time. Teachers do not provide materials that relate to the National Curriculum, there are no classroom instruments for pupils to achieve suitable standards of performing and composing and the accommodation is very poor.

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	100 (97)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	100 (100)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (100)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	54 (53)	35 (35)

There were 109 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. In 2003, all pupils gained five or more grades A* to C and a very large proportion gained grades A* to A. In all subjects, results were either well above the national subject average or, in nearly two thirds of the subjects, very high. The school set and met challenging targets for improvement.

5. The standards seen in Year 11 were very high in all subjects with the exception of ICT, modern languages and history where standards were well above average and music and citizenship where standards were above average. Pupils achieve excellently in religious education and very well in most other subjects with the exception of ICT and history where achievement is good and music, English and citizenship where it is satisfactory.

6. Standards of literacy are significantly above the national expectation. Pupils are articulate and very confident speakers. They read with good understanding and are able to find information using appropriate reference materials. Higher attainers have a particularly wide taste in their personal reading. Most pupils can express themselves clearly and accurately in writing. Standards of numeracy are also very high.

7. Pupils with special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils; they meet the targets in their individual education plans and improve their social as well as their academic skills. Teachers provide suitable work for pupils, and learning support assistants give well-focused support. The school admits very few pupils who are at the early stages of learning English. Nevertheless, those pupils who need it are provided with a very good quality of support and so make rapid progress. Every effort is also made to provide personal support and to help pupils to understand British culture. Pupils who are gifted and talented also achieve very well.

Sixth form

Students enter the sixth form with above average levels of attainment. By the end of Year 13, standards are very high and students achieve **very well**.

Main strengths

- Students are achieving well in nearly all their subjects as a result of the high levels of teaching, support and guidance they receive and their own outstanding commitment
- Examination results have risen significantly since the previous inspection report and are now very high overall
- Results in A-level ICT and physical education are very high and are in the top five per cent of schools nationally

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	98.7 (94.9)	94.8
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	53.5 (50.5)	39.4
Average point score per pupil	400 (343.2)	263.3

There were 120 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

National comparators are not yet available for GCE results in 2003.

Commentary

8. Results in 2002 were higher than the previous year and improved further in 2003. Results in nearly all examined subjects, in 2002, were above or well above average. The results for boys in English literature, physical education and ICT were in the top five per cent of schools. Results in economics and German were average but improved in 2003.

9. In the subjects inspected in detail, students attain very highly in English, ICT, geography and physical education and well above average in biology, chemistry, physics and French. Standards are above average in mathematics, design and technology and German. The standards achieved by girls and boys are similar. Students achieve very well in most of these subjects. In almost all other subjects taught in the sixth form, achievement is good or better.

10. Students achieve really well in physical education because of the outstanding leadership that has created a vast range of sporting opportunities for students to develop their skills. Students achieve very well in their other subjects because of the very good teaching they receive. Most students demonstrate well above average investigative skills, and they become confident independent learners who express themselves extremely well in writing. In some subjects, achievement is not as high as it is generally, though still good. This is due to various factors, such as lack of variety in teaching, too little focus on assessment or restrictions in access to resources.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance is **very good** because parents and pupils recognise its crucial role in high achievement. In all year groups, attitudes and behaviour are **excellent** and contribute powerfully to the achievements of pupils of all backgrounds and capabilities. Pupils' spiritual, moral, and social development is of **very high** quality.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' own high aspirations and resolute determination to succeed ensure that attitudes to learning and motivation to spend time on independent study are outstanding
- Pupils of all ages respond impressively to the school's ethos, with its very high expectations and clear moral and social codes, so behaviour is excellent, with a very low exclusion rate
- Personal qualities such as the capacity to reflect thoughtfully on issues, intellectual curiosity, independence and personal responsibility are nurtured exceptionally well in the school's daily life
- Attendance is very good because pupils are so committed to achieving their ambitions and their parents want them to make the most of what the school offers
- Lessons do not always start promptly, which is a disadvantage in short, single periods

Commentary

11. Pupils are extremely committed to their studies from the start of their time in school and determined to make the very best of the opportunities the school offers. As a result, pupils of all backgrounds and capabilities, including boarders, are very willing to go the extra mile with the work they are given to do on their own. As codes of conduct are so clear and well accepted, pupils behave extremely well, not least because they are focused on achieving all they can. As a result,

they listen to teachers with care and respect even when lessons are rather dull. They take learning seriously and make the most of their lessons, even when they are expected to spend long periods listening, or making notes rather than taking an active part in lively discussions or investigations. They use their abilities and learning skills decisively to take something useful from weaker lessons, rather than feel that time has been wasted treading water. As a result, sometimes they learn more than might have been expected from occasional lacklustre teaching. They thrive on the challenges set in the best lessons, which, as in religious studies, stimulate their intellectual curiosity or hone their skills, as in physical education.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	606	11	0
White – Irish	4	0	0
White – any other White background	35	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	23	2	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	3	1	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	11	1	0
Chinese	15	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	68	0	0

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

Example of excellent practice

This exemplifies how interactions between pupils’ own motivation and the school’s ethos, brought alive by the house system, result in an excellent approach to work and school life.

Pupils’ zest for learning and appetite for hard work stem from their own early aspirations and self-belief, reinforced by the school’s constant drive to *‘help people go beyond where they think they might go’*. The house system supports this goal impeccably, enabling healthy competition, mutual respect, responsibility to others and good humour to flourish. The school is quick to praise pupils’ efforts and curb self-doubt, which fosters self-confidence, a sense of achievement and motivation. It spurs effort. Having a go and high achievement are both prized because the crucial *‘can do’* culture is built securely on finding, nurturing and celebrating all pupils’ talents. Pupils relish the chance to test themselves in the classroom, on the sports field and in a whole range of challenging activities, from science competitions to rugby matches, because they want to fulfil their own goals and be part of the school’s success story.

12. Pupils show remarkable personal qualities, including an impressive degree of maturity. They have an extraordinary sense of responsibility to others and to parts of the school community, such as their house or sports teams, which grows during their time in the school. Pupils are courteous, considerate and self-disciplined. They show curiosity when presented with novel ideas and a capacity to reflect thoughtfully on a range of personal and philosophical issues, including those of faith and belief. Their respect for and understanding of people different from themselves develops very well, although just occasionally they show slight lack of awareness of how comments intended to be light-hearted might cause offence, as with graffiti on their exercise book covers. The school does all it can to discourage any form of intimidation, including racism and, as parents and pupils confirmed, is swift to act when bullying occurs. Pupils value diversity, particularly in their relationships with others in school. A few pupils with a passion for the arts say that they feel less highly regarded than those with other academic strengths or sporting prowess. This is partly

because the school's attention to art and music, as part of pupils' cultural awareness, has been a little less scrupulous than to personal development as a whole.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.0	School data	0
National data	7.8	National data	1.2

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

13. Parents and pupils share high aspirations, so absence is minimal and attendance well above average. The school has very effective systems for checking on absences and following up any possible truancy, including strong links with people in the town. Punctuality is generally good. Most lessons start very promptly but, in one or two cases, precious time is lost from very short, single lessons when teachers or pupils are late. This reduces pupils' chances of making the very best progress because there is too little scope for explanation and recap of new material.

Sixth form

As in the main school, students' attitudes and behaviour are **outstanding**, which helps them to fulfil their aspirations through high achievement.

Main strengths

- Sixth form students have highly developed critical thinking and study skills that enable them to achieve success in their chosen courses
- Sixth form students, including girls, make a telling contribution to the life of the school as role models for others

Commentary

14. Whether or not they are new to the school, students in the sixth form are very highly motivated, just like younger pupils. They use their skills in critical analysis to great effect across the range of subjects they study, particularly in lessons where inspiring teaching encourages them to think for themselves. They tolerate lessons that rely heavily on teachers giving lectures or instructions, rather than engaging them in debate, with great good humour. For example, after such a lesson was observed, students were at pains to stress that they had learned enough to enable them to do some more demanding work on their own, which they could then discuss with each other. Their independent study skills and this capacity to make the best use of what they are offered are significant factors in the success they achieve.

15. Sixth form students from all backgrounds, including girls, show exceptional maturity and determination to make the most of their opportunities to achieve all round success in school. Their attendance is very good. Their approach to school life sets the tone impressively for all pupils, as seen when sixth formers play a key part in assemblies. Girls fit in extremely well and have a very civilising influence on the whole school community. Students make the most of the school's efforts to help them achieve their personal goals, whether these are to reach a prestigious university, audition successfully for a place at drama school or join the RAF. As a result of the accomplished way they take on positions of responsibility, with great maturity and consideration for others, students offer excellent role models for younger pupils.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a **very good** quality of education. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. The learning opportunities provided for pupils through the curriculum are good in Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Opportunities for enrichment are excellent. The quality of support and guidance for pupils is excellent and has a significant effect on academic achievement and personal development. The school works very well with parents, the community and other schools and colleges to support pupils' achievement.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is **very good** with much that is excellent. It is particularly strong in the sixth form. The quality of assessment of pupils' work is very effective.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are excellent in religious education and very good in mathematics, science, art, design and technology, geography, modern foreign languages and physical education leading to very good achievement
- In Years 7 to 9, teaching is unsatisfactory in music and as a result pupils underachieve
- Teachers' very secure subject knowledge and expert understanding of examination requirements ensures pupils attain the highest standards
- Planning of work which meets pupils' needs and provides challenge and achievement is a strength of many subjects
- Marking of pupils' work, in most subjects, is helpful and gives clear guidance on how the work could be improved but in others it is inconsistent and provides little help towards improvement
- A few teachers are reluctant to try new strategies and ideas and so their teaching can be boring and unimaginative on occasions

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 133 lessons in Years 7 to 11

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
13 (10%)	52 (39%)	41 (31%)	23 (17%)	4 (3%)	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.

16. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 11 is excellent in religious education and is very good in all subjects with the exception of English, history and ICT, where it is good and music where it is unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11.

17. When teaching is most effective it is characterised by very secure knowledge of the subject; this is used well to ask searching questions and stretch the pupils within lessons. A clear strength in the teaching is the excellent knowledge teachers have of examination requirements and likely questions and the way in which they prepare pupils for examinations. Lessons are very well planned and provide steady development, year on year, covering all aspects of the subject fully and so increasing pupils' knowledge and understanding very well. At the same time, planning work that meets the needs of all pupils and helps them to achieve as well as possible is weak in music in Years 7 to 9 and a reason for the teaching being unsatisfactory.

Example of excellent practice in religious education

This exemplifies how interactions between the teacher's experiences and the use of well matched resources engaged Year 8 boys in higher order thinking skills. The topic was 'The Soul and Pathways to God: The life and personality of Krishna'.

Krishna is brought to life through story, fame and fable. Pupils draw on the experiences of their teacher's recent trip to India and are engrossed and fascinated by the use of anecdote and superior knowledge of Indian religion and culture. Learning becomes a 'cool' experience as Krishna is brought to life in the form of a cartoon character fighting off demons. Achievement is very high as the teacher skilfully draws out the opinions of the group. They discuss the ultimate question of good and evil and are able to explain the impact of Krishna teachings within the context of Indian religious culture. Pupils have used their Internet research skills to extend their knowledge and exchange information with their teacher and fellow pupils. "Would we know Jesus better if we had grown up with him and seen him in comic books?" Activities are matched sensitively to the needs of pupils. Indian comic books are passed out whilst the group consolidate previous information to construct a profile of Krishna. Excellent progress is made throughout the lesson culminating in pupils asking pertinent and searching questions regarding the difference between eastern and western ideologies and their portrayal of God. Knowledge and understanding is further extended by a homework essay which compares and contrasts the teachings of Krishna and Jesus.

18. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and also how pupils should behave. These do not need to be written down or reinforced verbally; pupils know that they are expected to work incredibly hard and do so without any fuss. This is a major factor in the high levels of achievement and learning pupils' experience. Pupils have outstanding attitudes towards work which helps them to learn very well. They make the best of every lesson they have even if on occasions the teaching is dull and mundane. Pupils are determined to achieve extremely well so they are prepared to put up with an element of unimaginative 'chalk and talk' style teaching and rely on their own efforts outside the lessons to ensure they fully understand the topic and make good progress. However, pupils really appreciate the lessons that actively engage them in interesting topics such as those in religious education and recent English lessons. A few teachers are reluctant to bring their teaching methods up to date and prefer to give lecture style lessons day-in-day-out. This lack of imaginative teaching is not appreciated by the pupils who much prefer to be actively involved in their learning. Teachers are not given enough opportunity to share and observe good practice within the school and even within departments.

19. The school considers the needs of all pupils very well to ensure all achieve equally. All pupils are monitored carefully to meet any special needs they may have and action is taken to give necessary support. Where appropriate an individual education plan is drawn up. Teachers address clear targets and monitor improvement for these pupils very well. Pupils and teachers are involved in half-termly reviews for improvement and setting targets so teachers have guidance in helping pupils to reach their targets and all pupils are included very well.

20. Assessment is very good overall. Most departments assess pupil progress through the use of frequent and detailed marking and testing systems. Departments are then able to transfer this information to a central school database. Some departments, notably history and music are not fully engaged with this approach. Others such as mathematics, modern foreign languages, geography, science, art and physical education are highly effective at routine assessment, but not all are yet using the central collection system.

21. In nearly all subjects, work is marked effectively and thoroughly, and pupils are made clearly aware of how their work might be improved. This helps pupils understand what they need to do to reach higher standards in examinations and to achieve well. Nevertheless, the use of marking to tell pupils how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve, and to guide teachers in their planning of work, is inconsistent and some subjects do not do it very well.

22. The Key Stage 3 National Strategy has recently been fully implemented in English and is showing a clear impact on standards and pupils' achievement. Other subject areas, whilst incorporating some elements such as three-part lessons, are slower to grasp the initiative and there is not yet a consistency of practice amongst all teachers. The school is aware of the situation and has recently made an appointment at a senior level to drive the initiative forward.

Sixth form

The quality of teaching and learning is **very good** and results in students achieving very well. Procedures for, and use of, assessment are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Highly knowledgeable teachers have an excellent understanding of examination requirements
- Teaching is very good and, as a result, students achieve extremely well
- Students' excellent attitudes are used to good effect by the teachers to encourage their independent learning skills
- Very good assessment procedures and marking provide clear guidance for students to improve their work
- Teaching in a small number of lessons lacks imagination and fails to engage the students in their own learning

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 48 lessons in Years 12 and 13

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6 (12%)	23 (48%)	16 (34%)	3 (6%)	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.

Commentary

23. In the subjects inspected in detail, the quality of teaching is very good in all subjects with the exception of design and technology and German where it is good. Although economics was not inspected in detail the quality of teaching in the lessons seen was weaker than in all other subjects.

24. All teachers are extremely knowledgeable about the subjects they teach and understand what is required for examination success. Teachers have an excellent knowledge of the course requirements and students are aware of what they need to do to achieve a specific grade. When teaching is excellent, students are encouraged to participate in discussions. They respond extremely well to questions and volunteer suggestions very articulately. Teachers plan very well and most lessons are very well structured. They proceed with a very brisk pace and allow students to consolidate each stage of new learning before progressing to the next stage. In a very small number of lessons teachers use tried and tested teaching methods and have not made a great deal of effort to investigate new ideas and strategies. This results in students being very passive and low-level interaction between student and teacher.

25. Students' excellent attitudes to learning are a major factor in their very good achievement through their advanced independent learning skills. Lessons are characterised by very good relationships between teachers and students and these result in good learning environments in which teachers can give of their best and students are incredibly keen to learn.

26. Teaching is clearly focused on the requirements of examinations. Work is marked effectively and thoroughly, and students are made clearly aware of how their work might be improved. Assessment procedures are very effective and the system generates an atmosphere within the school of a desire to continually improve. It is highly motivating and is welcomed by the students who appreciate the clarity of the objectives it produces and the subsequent extra support they receive from the staff to meet their personal objectives. Students value the oral feedback and discussion that follows the written assessment of their work.

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is **good** overall. All pupils have access to a worthwhile curriculum that will prepare them for further study. In Years 7 to 9 and in the sixth form, the curriculum is good. In Years 10 and 11, it is satisfactory. The opportunities for activities outside of lessons are outstanding. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is now very good but a number of weaknesses highlighted in the last inspection remain, including accommodation for some subjects.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides subject choices at GCSE and Advanced level, which reflect pupils' interests very well
- An outstanding range of activities is available for pupils outside of lessons
- The school does not meet the statutory requirements for: a daily act of collective worship, music in Years 7 to 9 and provision for ICT for all pupils in Years 10 and 11
- Arts provision is limited, which means that the curriculum, whilst good, is not fully balanced and does not meet the school's aim of educating the whole person
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is much better than at the time of the previous inspection

Commentary

27. The curriculum meets the statutory requirements for Years 7 to 9 with the exception that the provision for music does not cover all the required content of the National Curriculum. Pupils are offered a broad and appropriate range of subjects. All pupils study French and German. They are also taught biology, chemistry and physics as separate subjects. In Years 10 and 11, pupils follow a good range of examination courses in ten subjects. This includes three subjects from option groups which are well organised to reflect pupils' interests. Pupils who do not take the ICT option do not receive their statutory entitlement to ICT teaching in other subjects in a measured way. The curriculum is adjusted to meet the needs of pupils and students with special educational needs and there is some disapplication in Years 10 and 11 so that pupils are not overburdened with examinations.

28. The specialist status of the school is demonstrated through excellent technology links with the community and other schools and in design and technology which is a strength in the school, offering four different courses at GCSE, which are all well integrated. Other strengths are the excellent provision for religious education, and the very good careers education which starts in Year 8.

29. The personal, social and health education programme is now good, with well structured drug and sex education components. The citizenship programme is not coherent. Citizenship lessons are carefully planned in Years 7 to 11, but the contribution of other subjects is not. The two periods of form time are not consistently well used. The previous report was critical of the provision for the small number of pupils with special educational needs. The school has tackled this extremely well and provision is now very good.

30. The current timetable has some weaknesses as some lessons are too short for practical activities, and time is lost as a result of the numerous lesson changes. The school has undertaken a review to resolve these problems. However the proposals would lead to less regular time for music, art and physical education in Year 9 and could lead to the arts being further marginalized.

31. Pupils benefit from the outstanding range of activities they can participate in outside of lessons. These provide excellent enhancement of learning, and contribute richly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. In sport, provision is exceptional, with extensive opportunities at different levels, from school to county standard, and beyond. Pupils also take part in numerous other activities, such as; mathematics challenges, field trips including foreign religious study trips, foreign exchanges, and charity work. The recent success in the Physics Olympiad demonstrates the commitment of staff and pupils to making the most of these opportunities. About 50 pupils are members of the Combined Cadet Force and about 30 are involved in working towards the Duke of Edinburgh Awards. The house system provides further excellent opportunities in a variety of activities including the arts.

32. There is a good match of teachers to subjects and the sports hall provides an excellent facility for pupils to follow a wide range of sporting activities. Despite the conversion of the gymnasium into a performance space the accommodation and resources for music are very poor and severely inhibit the progress pupils can make. Rooming for art and history is unsuitable and there are insufficient science laboratories. Therefore accommodation is unsatisfactory overall.

Sixth form

The quality and range of learning opportunities in the sixth form is **good**. The college offers a broad yet traditional curriculum that provides very good opportunities for all students.

Main strengths

- Enrichment opportunities are excellent so students have the chance to be involved in lots of activities outside school
- Students are able to choose from a wide range of courses to meet their aspirations

Commentary

33. The school provides a very good range of twenty subjects at Advanced level, which are appropriate for a selective school, and reflect students' interests well. Most students follow three advanced level subjects, though some opt to study four. A few groups are rather small, such as in music and German, to be fully effective. All students take a general studies course which incorporates key skills. Careful consideration is given to the course of study adopted by some students with special educational needs. All students are very well prepared for the next step in their education. Students also benefit from the numerous excellent opportunities for enrichment. For example, twenty students in the Combined Cadet Force are following the BTEC (a vocational level 3 specialist qualification that focuses on particular aspects of employment within a sector) qualification for public services. The physical education programme provides students with the chance to coach, umpire and participate at school, local and county level.

Care, guidance and support

The school ensures the care, welfare and health and safety of its pupils **very well**. It provides first-rate support, advice and guidance. Pupils are monitored and supported very well indeed as they move through the school. Pupils' and students views are very well sought and taken into account.

Main strengths

- Pupils receive excellent support and very well-informed guidance
- Teachers know the pupils very well
- The house system is highly effective in looking after pupils
- Induction arrangements for Year 7 and Year 12 are extremely effective
- Trained sixth form students offer very effective support to younger pupils

Commentary

34. Staff take very good care of pupils and strive constantly to improve the quality of care so that pupils are enabled to achieve their full potential. Good procedures are in place to ensure the safety of all. The house system provides an excellent framework for care and the inter-house competitions for sport and drama encourage boys to do their very best. Pupils feel that they are well supported and guided and value the fact that they are known very well by the staff - "the school knows what happens to me almost before I do". Pastoral care works very well to support pupils' academic progress. Form tutors interview pupils to set and follow up targets for each half term and subject teachers also contact parents at any stage if there are problems with work. Pupils are very supportive of this system – they know where they are and what they need to do to improve. Boarding pupils are given additional support and really value the extra dimension this gives to their time at Adams'. Gifted and talented pupils and those who have special educational needs are very well supported. Most pupils have a strong relationship with teachers. They talk to their form tutor or whichever member of staff they know best. There is also a very effective system of trained sixth

form mentors who support younger pupils. In addition pupils can be referred to the school counsellor for support. The older pupils appreciate the guidance in subject choice and careers provided by the Connexions service.

35. Every half term all teachers submit information on the achievement and effort of each pupil they teach. This information is processed via an excellent school information management system, and results in all parents receiving a progress report every half term. Very good parental support and very effective communication between school and home supports pupils who have special needs. Teachers are well aware of these pupils. Personal support is offered through the house system and a counsellor is available for additional support. Referral systems are very effective in dealing with the needs of all pupils well.

36. The induction arrangements are excellent and new pupils are made to quickly feel at home through visits before they start at the school and the care they receive in the first few days. Parents are also introduced to the school. The emphasis on establishing informal links between key staff and parents has proved very useful in ironing out settling-in problems. The school is committed to democracy and has a very strong process of monitoring and evaluation, which takes pupils' views into account. The revised school council, which has been successful in introducing a multi-faith prayer room, has been effective in providing a good forum for pupils to express their views. Not all suggestions have been taken up – for example, the younger pupils would really like the opportunity to play football!

Sixth form

The **very good** provision for ensuring the health, safety, care and welfare of the pupils in the main school also extends into the sixth form.

Main strengths

- Students value the support and advice received as a result of the very good rapport established with their teachers
- Induction arrangements are very effective and allow girls to be integrated into the school exceedingly well
- Students are given very good guidance on their career paths

Commentary

37. Well-planned induction arrangements enable new sixth formers, girls and boys, to settle in well. There is an excellent system for monitoring progress and setting targets for further development and form tutors get to know their students very well. Sixth formers have a trusting relationship with a number of staff and they make good use of opportunities to ask advice. Students are helped and encouraged to work and study and teachers are supportive if they have a problem or encounter difficulties with their work. A significant minority of students, in their response to an inspection questionnaire, doubted that at least one member of staff knew them well. This was not borne out by inspection evidence or in discussion with students.

38. Students applying for university receive intensive help with their applications. They benefit greatly from staff expertise and are given very good guidance in choosing universities. Students value the independent advice provided by the Connexions service.

39. Sixth formers' opinions are highly valued. There are regular meetings between the sixth form council and senior staff and students also play a key role in the main school council. As prefects, house captains and sixth form mentors they play a major part in maintaining the excellent ethos of the school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a **very good** partnership with parents, resulting in very positive support for its activities and pupils' achievements. Links with other schools, colleges and the community are **very good** and have been strengthened very well as a result of the schools' technology college status.

Main strengths

- The quality of pupils' progress reports is excellent, which allows parents to see a clear picture of how well their children are doing and exactly what improvements are needed
- The school is at the heart of its local community, is very highly regarded and has forged strong links with local people and organisations
- Local schools benefit greatly from the school's technology college status and from its work with them on specific projects
- The school has a strong network of links with organisations outside the local area that benefit its pupils and their achievements

Commentary

40. Parents think very highly of the school because it lives up to their powerful expectations of it. Parents share the school's high aspirations for the young people it seeks to educate successfully. They work very well with the school. For example, on the rare occasions when something goes wrong or a pupil needs extra support for whatever reason, the school is usually very quick to contact parents and involve them in finding the best way forward for their child's happiness and success. Parents were quick to praise this. In many respects, such as comprehensive sharing of information about how well each pupil is doing, links with parents are excellent. However, parents indicated that, although most teachers are approachable and committed to working as closely as possible with them to ensure that pupils achieve all that they can, this is not always the case. They feel that the school has scope to consult them more carefully about its plans to improve facilities and provision. Parents value the fact that written reports give an exceptionally clear picture of each pupil's strengths and weaknesses. Frequent information on current and potential grades clarifies their child's rate of progress and exactly what to do to improve.

41. The local community is very proud of the school's traditions and reputation for academic and all-round success, so the school is at the heart of the town. As a result, informal links are very strong, with senior teachers very familiar to local people and ready to listen to any problems linked to the school. Local people help with history projects. Imaginative links such as those with the local Polish and Ukrainian communities and a Polish club in school have helped pupils to understand history and sometimes, their own heritage better. Students organise charity fund-raising involving local people and organisations. The school regularly uses local facilities for displays of pupils' art and project work. The new sports hall is used by members of the community as much as is practicable, given the school's boarding facility.

42. The school works very well with other local secondary schools on projects such as drugs education, so that the whole community of local young people have a very clear idea of issues involved. It helps to make them familiar with organisations that can help them with matters of personal health and safety. Very good links with many schools and colleges allow very smooth transfer to and from the school.

43. International links, including those via the Internet and foreign exchanges with France and Germany, are valued highly by the school and its pupils. The school has a wide range of strong links that stem from its technology college status, which include visits to and from local primary schools for technology lessons and workshops. Pupils take part in Arkwright Scholarship examinations and related visits to businesses in Telford. Many school clubs have a technology focus that draws in ideas from the world of work, including many different design clubs and CAD/CAM master classes. These opportunities enrich pupils' experience of technology and benefit their problem-solving skills. All of this is underpinned by the high level support the school receives through its excellent links with the Worshipful Company of Haberdashers.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good** throughout the school. The headteacher provides excellent leadership, striving for the highest possible standards in all areas of the school's work. Governance of the main school and sixth form is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The determination of the headteacher and governors and the commitment of key staff to raising standards are outstanding
- The governing body has considerable expertise and specialist knowledge and play an important part in managing the school
- Leadership and management in music are unsatisfactory, though good or better in most subjects
- The management of the boarding provision is very good
- The monitoring of teaching and learning is not consistent within departments
- The schools' technology college development plan is clearly focused on raising standards

Commentary

44. The headteacher is a powerful role model for the school and is inspirational in his vision. He is both committed and self-critical in his strategic thinking and planning for improvement. He knows the school well, including individual pupils. He has very high expectations for all and is focused on pupils achieving very high standards with regard to both personal and academic achievement. The key roles of staff are to promote high achievement through effective teaching and improving examination results. He maintains close contact with department heads through the senior management team with regard to the performance of departments, teachers and pupils. Under his leadership, senior staff take on real authority and responsibility.

45. There is a very good working relationship between the governors and the headteacher. Governors appreciate the hard work and drive of the headteacher in raising standards and achievement. The governing body has a wide range of expertise and experience amongst its members which is used very effectively to shape the direction of the school. There are appropriate committees with delegated powers. Governors are kept informed about the school through meeting and reports and they are not afraid to challenge the views of the headteacher. The pattern of the governing body's work meshes well with the development cycle keeping in close touch with the school's work at all stages. They are well aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and are fully involved in planning and formulating policies. Governors have not, however, ensured that the school complies with all statutory requirements for collective worship, music and ICT.

46. The senior management team is very well organised with well-defined areas of responsibility. They share the headteacher's vision and work harmoniously in moving the school forward. Management places a high priority on appointing well-qualified staff and deploying them to best effect. Managers are observant and perceptive and anticipate potential problems extremely well. They take quick and decisive action for optimum results. For example, very good support has recently been put into the English department to tackle the underachievement of a number of boys.

47. The school development plan has a strong focus on raising pupil achievement. The priorities echo the unique ethos of the school and its commitment to educating the whole person as well as emphasising high academic achievement. The school technology college development plan provides clear strategic direction. Each aspect has crisp priorities, with clearly described steps and outcomes.

48. Opportunities for professional development are very good. Staff have appropriate training in their subject areas and are encouraged to pursue academic interests and courses for personal advancement. There are systems for sharing good practice in the form of lesson observations but they are not fully effective. Monitoring of the quality of teaching has lacked rigour and the senior management has been slow to tackle the problems of a number of staffing issues. There has been a lack of sharply focused, firm and decisive action. In music, leadership and management are

unsatisfactory and have been for some time. There has been significant underachievement for several years and senior leaders have not acted decisively to put this right. Underachievement in English is being dealt with effectively but again has taken too long to resolve. Inconsistency across departments in monitoring the quality of teaching is now being tackled by a recent senior management appointment. Despite these relative weaknesses there are significantly more strengths in the leadership and management of the school.

49. Management of the boarding houses is particularly strong. Two heads of house ensure all aspects of boarding life are very well managed. Department managers are generally very good and focus clearly on raising standards and gaining examination success. National initiatives, like the Key Stage 3 Strategies, have been slow to embed themselves in the day-to-day work of the school. This has been recognised and there are plans to improve this situation. Nevertheless, to date there has not been a sharp enough focus on exploring new teaching techniques as a crucial step to whole school improvement. Not all subject leaders have a clear vision or a willingness to grasp new initiatives to improve teaching even further.

50. The school has excellent systems for the collection and distribution of information on the academic progress of individual pupils. This information is analysed so that subject and class performance can be assessed and the school management is able to obtain a clear view of the progress of the school, subject departments and individual classes and pupils. It also forms part of the school performance management system and is used to establish targets and hence drive up overall performance.

51. The school has improved a great deal since the last inspection and standards have risen dramatically. The school's performance in most subjects and courses is much improved. Collective worship, although not daily, is of high quality and assemblies are an uplifting experience for both staff and pupils. It now remains for the management team to develop further and extend the role of middle management and tighten the monitoring procedures. This will improve even more the quality of teaching and learning across all departments.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,154,410	Balance from previous year	51973
Total expenditure	3,146,143	Balance carried forward to the next	60240
Expenditure per pupil	4,129		

52. Financial management is very good. Governors play a full part in setting and monitoring a budget that will maintain the academic excellence of the school but do not monitor the impact of new funding sources such as the school's technology college status. Spending is prioritised in line with the school improvement plan. The bursar's financial controls within the school are secure. The school always seeks to provide the best value for money. Even though the expenditure per pupil is high the school provides very good value for money.

Sixth form

The sixth form benefits from **very good** leadership. It is very well managed. Governance is very good.

Main strengths

- Leadership is very effective and has made a significant contribution to raised standards
- The integration of girls into the sixth form is very well managed
- Sixth form students have important leadership roles within the school

Commentary

53. Leadership is dedicated to ensuring the highest possible standards in all areas of the sixth form. It is characterised by effective delegation and teamwork coupled with a passionate desire to build on success and improve further. Management is very effective and committed. The very well qualified staff team provide high quality learning opportunities for their students. Support and guidance in the form of target setting and academic review closely monitor all students at every stage of their learning. Students are very much involved in this process and parents are regularly informed of their pastoral and academic progress.

54. The sixth form is very well managed on a day-to-day basis so that it is harmonious and successful. This has led to very good achievement and good progress since the last inspection. The ethos of the sixth form is impressive. This is due to the strong relationships forged on mutual trust and respect and the impact of the boarding house provision. Students are given responsibilities that actually mean something; they have important roles to play in establishing the expectations of behaviour and attitudes especially within the boarding house. The Year 11 boys who continue their education at Adams' and the students from elsewhere, including girls, who join Year 12 each year are very well integrated. Students are involved in the pastoral care of pupils, community service and charity work. This success is due to the smooth running of all aspects and areas of sixth form life and very good communication between departments and senior management. The sixth form has a deservedly high reputation.

THE BOARDING PROVISION

The quality of the boarding provision is **very good**. Only boys are boarders. Boarding is very effective because it fosters the academic and personal development of the boarders and enhances the school ethos. Overall, the school's compliance with the national minimum standards for boarding (Care Standards Act 2000) is good. Boarding provision has improved since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Boarders achieve very highly because house staff enable them to make the most of the opportunities for studying, taking responsibility and doing activities
- There are excellent relationships between house staff and pupils, and between the boarders themselves
- Boarding makes a strong contribution to the life of the whole school
- The induction and training of staff has weaknesses in important areas

Commentary

55. Longford Hall boarding house is located on a separate site from the main school and accommodates the junior boarders from Years 7, 8 and 9, plus six pupils from Year 10. At the time of the inspection there were 39 termly or weekly boarders living at Longford Hall, plus eight day boarders. There were 52 termly or weekly boarders living in the senior house based on the main school site. The accommodation provided on both sites meets the needs of the pupils very well.

56. Leadership and management in both houses are very good. Both junior and senior boarding houses have a resident housemaster and a good team of boarding masters, house tutors and matrons. Both housemasters are enthusiastic and dedicated to boarding as a way of life. They set high standards and lead by example. There is a close match between boarding policies and practice and there are regular house meetings. As a result, house staff have created an environment which allows the boarders to experience degrees of freedom and control appropriate to their age. The current focus of strategic planning is to provide all boarding accommodation at the Longford Hall site. The housemasters have dedicated budgets for day-to-day improvements to accommodation and facilities. Overall, short term planning is not rigorously monitored in terms of progress and responsibilities. In particular there are weak links between staff job descriptions, appraisal and training.

57. The level of care given to the boarders is high. In both houses, all the staff play their part in creating a distinct family atmosphere. The matrons make the boarders' life as homely as possible and are always on hand to help pupils with domestic or personal problems. Medical records are efficiently and securely kept and there is very good liaison with the school doctor. Both houses have appropriate facilities for pupils who are unwell. For the most part the school exceeds the statutory minimum standards of care.

58. Boarding life was observed in the early morning, at lunchtime and during the evening. The supervision of pupils was in accordance with the age and maturity of the boarders. Staff and pupils are aware of health and safety requirements and strive to meet them. The accommodation in both boarding houses is comfortable, with good provision for study and leisure. The pupils' obvious appreciation of the character and size of the dormitories, which they show considerable flair and imagination in personalising, outweighs the minor disadvantages of living in old buildings.

59. The provision for the personal development of the boarders and the extension of their academic work is excellent. A key feature of the success of this aspect of boarding is the status system. This has been introduced for junior and senior pupils since the last inspection. There is comprehensive pastoral tracking for each individual, which awards one of four types of status. The combined output and effort in the areas of academic work, house routine, relationships, house environment, and extra-curricular activities determine status level. A boarder's status is directly linked to privileges and responsibilities. The system is very effective in developing the whole person and in raising levels of achievement. Parents are regularly informed of their son's progress. They also receive well-written communications on general boarding matters, both as new parents and as established ones. There is a wide range of week-end and week-day activities and the latter benefit all pupils.

60. The quality of relationships between house staff and pupils and between the boarders themselves is excellent. There is a high degree of mutual trust and respect between staff and pupils. Pupils are proud to be boarders and they recognise their personal achievements and those of others. They get on well with their peers in the house and in the school. They give help to those who are younger or who are new to boarding. The happy and positive relationships within the houses are a major factor in the success of boarding, which in its turn contributes to the life of the whole school. Overall the boarding facility provides excellent value for money.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching uses varied lesson activities which draw in pupil interest and curiosity and encourage them to think independently
- Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9 because of improved teaching and good use of national strategies; the full impact of this has not yet reached Years 10 and 11
- Pupils work very hard in class because teaching has the right mixture of stimulus and encouragement
- Guidance given to pupils on how well they are doing and what they need to do in order to improve is not specific enough
- Middle and lower attainers make too many spelling mistakes because strategies to teach spelling lack focus

Commentary

Examination results

61. Results in national tests taken at the end of Year 9 were very high. The proportion reaching above the expected level (Level 5) was twice that found nationally. This position has been maintained consistently over several years. However, performance at higher levels (6 and 7) was below that found in schools where pupils have similar standards of attainment on entry. In 2003 GCSE English language, results were far above the expected standards, with all boys reaching higher grades (A*-C). Nevertheless, standards were below those in other subjects taken. Since the last inspection, results have improved.

Standards and achievement

62. Standards of work have improved considerably since the last inspection and reflect the impact of the national strategy. In Years 7 to 9, pupils answer questions with clarity and precision, and conduct sensible discussions in class. They read a range of books, plays and poems with interest, and acquire very high levels of understanding about narrative technique and character development in novels. Pupils are now achieving well overall because of improved teaching. Their work rate is very high because the teaching stimulates and encourages them. Written work displays the ability to formulate and extend personal thinking so that pupils communicate effectively to others. It demonstrates a very good control of sentence and paragraph structure, communicating ideas clearly and logically to the reader. Higher attainers produce vivid and arresting original stories and descriptions. They are being pushed to achieve much better than in previous years. However, middle and lower attainers' spelling spoils the effect of otherwise well-thought-out pieces. They write words as they sound rather than in the conventional form, because teaching is not vigorously focused enough on improving spelling.

63. By the end of Year 11, higher-attaining pupils write extremely well about what they read, demonstrating mature insights and acute understanding of the emotional and technical impact made in plays and poetry, ranging from Shakespeare to Seamus Heaney. They analyse confidently the content, language and historical context of poetry very well, while still articulating personal responses. Middle and lower attainers recount narrative events in a work, but do not always go on to analyse theme and meaning in plays and poems in enough depth. Attainment in GCSE examinations has been well below that of other subjects for several years, as teaching has not extended the potential of those capable of reaching higher levels. Achievement is further forward this year than in previous years, because teaching has improved considerably. It makes greater challenges to individuals capable of reaching the highest levels. Nevertheless, pupils' achievement has not yet reached the full potential that recently improved teaching methods now promise for the future.

Teaching and learning

64. Teaching over time it has been good rather than very good. Teaching seen during the inspection was very good. Recent improvements have not yet made its full influence on standards. In Years 7 to 9 teachers plan their time extremely well to make learning interesting, building thoughtfully on the ideas of national initiatives. They question, prompt, and support pupils sensitively, while leading them on to question what they learn and to think independently. Learning benefits from the stimulus of a variety of activities in each lesson, which engage attention and interest and deepen understanding. In Years 10 and 11, teachers stimulate pupils' curiosity and interest by encouraging them to experiment with ideas, while ensuring that they analyse texts methodically and meet examination demands exceedingly well. Written work is marked conscientiously but comments are not consistently specific about the level reached, and do not explain fully what needs to be done in order to improve further.

Leadership and management

65. Leadership has analysed the causes of previous underachievement realistically and promoted teaching which establishes the right blend of stimulus and encouragement to help pupils reach their full potential. As a result, lessons are now extremely well planned to interest, involve and stretch the potential of pupils at all levels of attainment. Systems for monitoring pupil progress have been improved so that weaknesses are picked up and action taken to remedy them. Management is satisfactory because the improvements have yet to have full impact. It is now improving as a result of the way in which leadership has identified priorities for improvement.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

66. Standards of literacy across the curriculum are very high overall. Pupils' fluency and involvement in discussion is outstanding because they consider, develop, consolidate and express ideas with fluency and enthusiasm. Religious education systemically promotes excellent standards of writing, involving highly-developed grammatical skills and a challenging use of subject specialist language. Discussion work is very good in science, mathematics, art, geography, physical education and religious education. A well-managed library does much to promote reading for pleasure as well as to build research skills and the use of reference material. Writing is well used to record and evaluate experiments and ideas in science and history, but unevenly developed in mathematics. In English, there is a very good balance of small and large group discussion to explore and come to terms with ideas before going on to tackle written assignments. The subject applies beneficially the lessons learned from national initiatives to improve standards of literacy. Standards of writing are very high overall, and demonstrate pupils' ability to formulate their own ideas, as well as to synthesise and evaluate factual material. Nevertheless, writing suffers from inconsistent spelling, because the school lacks a uniform approach to teach spelling across the subjects.

Modern foreign languages

Provision in French and German is **very good**.

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching ensures that pupils achieve highly in GCSE examinations
- Pupils get a very good foundation in both French and German by the end of Year 9
- Very good leadership and management have improved the department since the last inspection
- In a small number of Year 8 and 9 classes, the pace and structure of lessons are not rigorous enough to keep all pupils motivated and on task

Commentary

Examination results

67. Results in the 2003 GCSE exams were well above average. Compared to the national averages for boys in French and German, the results were very high (in the top five per cent). Over half of the pupils entered for French gained A* or A grades.

Standards and achievement

68. By the end of Year 9, pupils are familiar with a variety of tenses and can therefore talk about past, present and future events with ease. Pupils' achievement is very good because they reach these standards in both French and German. By the end of Year 11, pupils cope confidently with higher level listening and reading tasks and are preparing coursework on topics, such as the local environment, using a wide range of vocabulary. Pupils respond quickly to questions and can keep up a fluid conversation covering a good variety of topics.

Teaching and learning

69. Teachers have an excellent command of French and German and usually speak in the language for the duration of the lesson. This helps to develop pupils' listening skills and also provides a very good role model. Lessons are frequently well structured and delivered at a brisk pace to maintain pupils' interest and concentration. Teachers have an excellent understanding of examination requirements, communicate these clearly to pupils and provide them with well thought out support materials. Homework is used well to extend work done in the classroom. Pupils' attitudes are very good. In a small number of Year 8 and 9 classes, the pace and structure of lessons is not good enough so pupils become bored and behaviour and attitudes suffer. Although teachers speak a lot of French and German, there is some lack of consistency in the range and frequency of opportunities for pupils to speak and practise new language in lessons.

Leadership and management

70. Very good leadership and management has sustained high standards and improved the quality of teaching significantly since the last inspection. A thorough review of schemes of work has improved the progress and the attainment of pupils particularly by the end of Year 9. The strong emphasis on teachers using the target language has also helped to raise standards. Assessment is well organised and helps pupils to set themselves targets for the future. The department is well aware of the contribution ICT can make to language learning and the handbook contains a well-researched list of useful websites. Nevertheless, the department is not able to gain sufficient access to ICT facilities to make best use of this approach to learning.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very high standards and excellent exam results because of very good teaching
- Very effective leadership has ensured very good progress since the last inspection
- Assessment procedures are very effective so pupils achieve extremely well
- Not enough emphasis is placed on the development of literacy and the use of correct mathematical terminology and ICT is not used well enough in lessons

Commentary

Examination results

71. On entry to the school pupils are well above national standards. At the end of Year 9, attainment is well above the national average. GCSE results in 2003 were very high.

Standards and achievement

72. Standards of work at the end of Year 9 are well above average and pupils achieve very well. Based on very effective assessment, teachers constantly adapt their teaching to meet pupils' learning needs so they are coached to get very high exam results. By the end of Year 11, standards have risen even further, and are very high. Pupils are often working at levels above GCSE A* standards. At the beginning of Year 10, they are given targets for their final GCSE grade and their determination and drive to succeed ensures they do very well. Pupils work extremely hard and all achieve standards that are significantly higher than normally found. Pupils' attainment increases as they progress through the school because of the well structured sequences of lessons.

Teaching and learning

73. Teaching is very effective and delivered by an extremely capable and highly knowledgeable team of staff who expect the best from all pupils. Weaknesses in pupil performance are quickly spotted and dealt with very effectively. Teachers are constantly aiming to get pupils to do better. Pupils are regularly tested and the results compared with those obtained in the same tests the previous year. Pupils respond well to this approach, which becomes very competitive as pupils try to do better than other classes and years.

74. In a very small number of lessons individual pupils are allowed to 'switch off' and they do not achieve as well as they should because teachers do not always match the work to the ability of all the pupils. Pupils experience a wide range of mathematics, because the routine work is enriched by competitions and the provision of after-school support and various other clubs and activities. Although teachers make some use of the ICT facilities, it is not used consistently across the department.

Leadership and management

75. The system of checking on pupil performance and the action taken is a significant factor in the high attainment of the pupils. Some short teaching periods in poorly equipped rooms are not productive. Although teachers share ideas, the absence of regular observation of teaching means that some teachers do not see things that work 'in action'. As a result, some good teaching approaches are not being more widely applied. The department has made considerable progress in dealing with all the issues raised in the last inspection report.

Mathematics across the curriculum

76. Pupils have a high level of numeracy. As a result, departments such as science and geography that frequently require good numeric understanding and competence are able to take this competence 'as read'. All departments ensure pupils have some opportunity to use their mathematical skills.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well and attain very high standards due to very good teaching and excellent attitudes
- Pupils behave very well and have an excellent approach to their work so they stick to their tasks until they finish them
- Regular testing and detailed marking help pupils to improve
- Homework is used extremely well to help pupils continue learning outside the classroom
- Pupils have too few chances to develop their skills in ICT

Commentary

Examination results

77. By the end of Year 9, attainment was very high. Results in the GCSE examinations were very high compared to national averages. Over the last three years, they have been maintained at this level.

Standards and achievement

78. Standards seen at the end of Years 9 and 11 are very high. Pupils start school with standards well above average. To reach and maintain very high standards over the course of five years represents very good achievement. Pupils are set very demanding work and, because of their excellent attitude to study, they achieve very well. For example, pupils in Year 7 study atomic structure and can use it to explain ionic bonding. Pupils throughout the school have not got the skills needed for handling data logging devices because they have not yet used them.

Teaching and learning

79. Lessons are very well planned to develop ideas to a high level. Homework is set regularly and extends the work done in class very effectively. Pupils expect to work hard and usually complete exercises very well. Their knowledge and understanding is frequently tested to promote very good learning. Teachers regularly monitor how well pupils are doing to identify anyone who is underachieving so that they can be helped. In biology, pupils receive certificates to celebrate consistent achievement. This helps to keep their enthusiasm for the subject at a high level. The science faculty provides activities outside the school day, such as clubs, competitions, visits and demonstrations, which stretch pupils and enrich their experience of science. For example, Year 11 pupils recently came second in a national physics competition. Technicians provide very good support to teaching and learning despite the cramped preparation areas and insufficient storage space.

Leadership and management

80. The main focus of the faculty is to maintain the very high standards that exist. The three separate science departments are managed very well. Each runs efficiently and copes very well with the problem of too few laboratories. Good practice is shared well within any one science department, such as the use of a three-part lesson in biology, but there are too few chances for teachers to learn from colleagues in different science areas. The appropriate department leader monitors teaching in each department; this has resulted in a lack of consistency within the faculty. The department has not made much use of ICT so far but plans are in place to introduce data loggers into lessons and make better use of their data projectors. It is a tribute to the very good teaching and excellent attitudes of pupils that they cope so well with the unsatisfactory accommodation. Standards have improved and assessment is now very good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **satisfactory** in Years 7 to 9 and **unsatisfactory** in Years 10 and 11.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well above average	Well above average
Achievement	Good	Good for those pupils following the GCSE course. Unsatisfactory for those not taking GCSE.
Teaching and Learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards attained by those pupils following the discrete ICT course are well above average
- Opportunities given to pupils in Years 10 and 11 who do not follow a specialist course are inconsistent and not monitored
- Pupils use homework very effectively to support their ICT lessons and independent learning is very well developed so they achieve well
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have less than the recommended time for separate ICT lessons, but the use of ICT across other subjects is monitored and assessed

Commentary

Examination results

81. GCSE results in 2003 were well above the national average.

Standards and achievement

82. In Years 7 to 9 pupils are very confident in their use of ICT and their practical skills are well developed. Most show competence in the use of software packages and they are able to undertake complex searches from the Internet to extract data, and present it coherently. Pupils appreciate the fact that the ICT facilities are open before and after school and during lesson breaks and use them well. They rely on this additional use of computers because they receive less than the recommended time for the subject in lessons. By the end of Year 11 pupils following the GCSE course have a solid understanding of modelling and database design. Their communication skills are very good and they are able to select relevant information and analyse it and present it logically. They are able to apply their ICT skills to enhance their learning in many other subjects and, because they have good access to computers within school and at home, consequently they achieve well. The other half of the year group rely on using ICT within other subjects and this use is patchy and not monitored so they do not achieve as well as they should.

Teaching and learning

83. Teachers have a very good subject knowledge, which they are able to pass on to the pupils. Lessons are well planned. There is good technical support. In the best lessons, the pace enabled pupils to achieve high standards very quickly. In these lessons, pupils were engrossed in the teaching and responded to practical tasks enthusiastically. Teacher to pupil relationships are good in all lessons. Pupils have a very positive attitude towards their lessons. They enjoy working very hard, are very good independent learners and continue this level of work outside school hours through effective homework that consolidates work done in lessons. Teaching of ICT within other subjects in Years 10 and 11 is not consistent and aspects of the subject requirements are not fully delivered.

Leadership and management

84. Leadership and management of the ICT department are good but management of ICT within subjects is weaker. A clear vision of the development of ICT has largely been put into practice but the new national initiative for ICT has not been implemented. The head of ICT who is also ICT coordinator has worked hard to ensure a comprehensive mapping of its delivery through other subjects. However, although considerable effort has been made in ensuring planned and regular use of ICT for all pupils, opportunities given to those in Years 10 and 11 who do not follow a specialist course are inconsistent and some of the issues reported in the last inspection remain.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

85. The use of ICT across the school has developed in recent years and there are now some very good features but the use of ICT is not as developed as normally found in a school with specialist technology status. In most subjects, computers are used to enhance the learning in the subject, rather than contributing to the ICT programmes of study. Several good examples of ICT use were noted. In a Year 8 geography lesson, pupils used ICT for group activities on virtual farm fieldwork, selecting information from the Internet and presenting it as a report. ICT is used well in design and technology lessons for modelling in Years 7 to 9. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 also use control technology and simulations in their design and technology lessons to support their learning. In science, ICT is used by pupils for modelling, simulations and the presentation of data although the use of data-logging has yet to be introduced. In music, computers are not used by pupils in Years 7 to 9.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils attain very high standards and achieve very well as a result of very effective teaching
- Very good management has resulted in good progress since the last inspection
- Pupils' excellent attitudes ensure they strive to do well in every lesson
- Teachers do not make enough use of a wider variety of related material to 'spark off' geographical thinking in pupils

Commentary

Examination results

86. GCSE results in 2003 were very high when judged against national standards; well over half achieved the top grades of A* and A.

Standards and achievement

87. Pupils attain very high standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Their achievement in relation to their attainment on entry is very good. In Year 7, pupils are able to use difficult mapping skills to locate settlements. By Year 9, pupils have a very good understanding of sophisticated links between wealth and the location of countries in the European Union (E U). They talk and write cogently about the implications of an expanded E U and demonstrate high levels of mathematics skills. In Year 11, pupils' high quality fieldwork enables them to reach very high standards.

Teaching and learning

88. Teachers are very experienced and encourage pupils to work very hard. They have excellent subject knowledge and use this to give very clear explanations to a level that secures very high standards, although the most gifted pupils could sometimes be stretched even further. Lively, penetrating and topical assignments challenge pupils well but there is not enough use of a wider range of geographical material (video clips, artifacts, and people and satellite images) to increase pupils' understanding. Teachers give very good guidance on examination technique and this complements the high work rate that pupils show in their independent research. Pupils' learning is enhanced by their excellent attitudes and the high quality of their written work. Their home and class work are marked thoroughly and consistently. ICT is used well in many lessons.

Leadership and management

89. Standards have improved since the last inspection. Day-to-day management is very effective but leadership is less so because there is a lack of vision to incorporate a variety of modern teaching styles and exciting resources into lessons.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

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

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and pupils achieve well because of consistently good teaching
- Effective and improving management have resulted in good progress since the last inspection
Teachers do not use assessment consistently to set pupils targets for learning
- Unsatisfactory accommodation and limited resources hold back effective co-ordination, and monitoring of pupils' progress

Commentary

Examination results

90. The results at GCSE in 2003 were well above average.

Standards and achievement

91. Standards of work seen are well above average for the end of Years 9 and 11. All pupils achieve well compared to their standards on entry to the school. Pupils have very good historical knowledge, understanding and skills. They use historical sources confidently and critically to justify arguments and have the ability to analyse the links between events and developments in different periods. Higher attaining pupils often make particularly perceptive comments showing their ability to place the topic under discussion in the wider context. Pupils work well independently and make very good use of their ICT skills.

Teaching and learning

92. The high standards reflect good teaching. Teachers' very good subject knowledge is well respected by pupils and their personal research brings lessons to life. Teachers also have a very good understanding of the examination requirements and prepare pupils really well. GCSE coursework is well planned, researched and argued. The most successful teaching is characterised by persistent, searching questions, which push pupils to develop and justify their arguments. Under such pressure the most able pupils produce work of very high quality. Where tasks are not fully thought through, teaching is less successful and pupils become restless and do not achieve as well as they should. Teachers assess and mark work regularly and this provides very good guidance for improvement. However there are inconsistencies in the quality of guidance. Pupils do not evaluate their own progress and tracking of their progress is limited.

Leadership and management

93. Recent changes have enabled the department to be managed more efficiently. Schemes of work have been developed and common assessment tasks introduced. Regular department meetings have now been established though not all teachers are able to attend making it difficult for effective leadership to develop. Whilst improvement since the last inspection has been good, the unsatisfactory accommodation is holding the department back in tracking pupils and sharing ideas because of the lack of a departmental office.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **excellent**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Very high	Very high
Achievement	Excellent	Excellent
Teaching and Learning	Excellent	Excellent

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

Main strengths

- Standards are very high as a result of outstanding teaching and the excellent attitudes of pupils
- High quality leadership and management have resulted in very good progress
- Standards of behaviour and personal relationships have a really positive effect on learning

Commentary

Examination results

94. GCSE results in 2003 were significantly above average. They have continued to rise since the previous inspection.

Standards and achievement

95. By the end of Year 9, pupils consistently work at near their capacity, and make sustained and comprehensive gains in their learning as they move up the school. Work is very demanding and as a result pupils achieve excellently in relation to their earlier attainment. Pupils' knowledge of and about religious education is excellent. They are encouraged to think for themselves, relate personal story and anecdote to aid their understanding. They make careful and varied presentations, a good example being the portrayal of Krishna through popular media in Year 8. Pupils' achieve very well due to the high expectations of their teachers and through the very strong emphasis on planning and preparing their work at home. In Years 10 and 11 pupils follow the agreed syllabus through PSHE lessons and a large number take the GCSE course. By the end of Year 11, pupils' knowledge and understanding of religion is outstanding. All pupils show confidence in their effective use of research techniques to support their GCSE coursework planning and preparation. They ask pertinent questions, debate with great skill and apply their knowledge to real life issues in the context of moral and religious ethics.

Teaching and learning

96. Teaching expertise and subject knowledge is of the highest calibre. Teachers explain the most difficult concepts and religious terms clearly and succinctly so pupils learn extremely well. Philosophical debate is embedded in the teaching process. A good range of activities captures the interest and involvement of all pupils and teachers' expectations regarding levels of attainment, productivity and behaviour are extremely high. Pupils respond with excellent attitudes to lessons and work incredibly hard. A generous and interesting range of materials, texts and artefacts support pupils' learning. This provides them with the depth and range of information, which extends their knowledge well beyond the expected standards.

Leadership and management

97. A great deal of progress has been made since the previous inspection. Leadership is dedicated to ensuring the highest possible standards and achievement in all areas of the departments work. Teaching staff are dedicated and hardworking. They are ambitious and keen to learn from best practice and use assessment effectively to inform both curriculum planning and individual target setting. The department is about to improve the lesson format to ensure the needs of very high attaining and gifted and talented pupils are dealt with even more effectively.

TECHNOLOGY

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

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

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent leadership has resulted in a cooperative staff team and very good progress since the last inspection
- Pupils learn and achieve very well because all are encouraged to work very hard by the very effective teaching
- There has been very significant progress in the accommodation, staffing and resourcing of technology since the time of the previous inspection. However, some practical classes are too large for the available space
- Problem solving technology principles are not always applied to all lessons so a minority of pupils do not do as well as they could

Commentary

Examination results

98. GCSE results in 2003 were very high and continue a trend of very high results. The best results are obtained in graphics.

Standards and achievement

99. By the end of Year 9, pupils' competence in working creatively and effectively with a wide range of materials, often more than one together, is excellent. They also gain a very good knowledge of what the subject is about and how to solve problems using a technological approach.

100. By the end of Year 11, pupils also have extremely well developed practical skills and knowledge of theory. Nearly all gain a really good understanding of why technologists work the way they do, why people choose one material over another in a given context and of the behaviour of electric and electronic circuits. Pupils achieve very well throughout their time in school. There is no significant difference between pupils in different groups. In particular, the department takes special care with those pupils with additional learning needs such as dyslexia.

Teaching and learning

101. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 reward teachers' very high expectations by working outstandingly hard, and with real enjoyment. They are very good independent learners and also show excellent levels of meaningful collaboration when required to work in groups. Teachers are experts in their subject and pass their skills on very well to the pupils. Work is modified so that all pupils achieve very well. The way teachers encourage and challenge all learners in a class is a particular strength. Teachers use ICT resources very well to demonstrate ideas and ensure pupils fully understand what is expected. Teachers do not always apply problem-solving principles and practice to designing. Assessment does not always inform some pupils of what they need to do to get better.

Leadership and management

102. Leadership is inspirational and purposeful and there is a clear, shared vision to improve standards even further. The staff team work well together; they act as consultants to all the pupils and the way they encourage a clear overview of the nature and practice of technology is excellent. Teaching has improved, leadership is now excellent and the subject now fully meets requirements. Aspects of management are not as strong, particularly the coordination of the impact of technology throughout other subjects. There are now more workshops and staff; however, some practical classes are still rather too large for some rooms which puts undue pressure on teachers to ensure additional safety procedures are fully in place.

Technology across the curriculum

103. The school is in Phase 3 of its recognition as a specialist technology college, and has support in this from the Haberdashers' Company (an ancient London guild which helps fund and govern nine schools in England and Wales). As such, Adams' Grammar school is expected to improve standards, especially in technology, science, mathematics, and ICT. Technology is a constructive and organised approach to solving all kinds of problems; this approach is very much a strength of the technology department itself, appears quite often in work in ICT, art and physical education, and is there to an extent in science. There is also a growing technological culture in modern languages and in general studies in the sixth form, but little sign of it yet in mathematics. The school has a management group to oversee aspects of technology college status in practice, but this has no brief to consider technology in the whole curriculum and there is no single coordinator for this.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

ART

Provision in art is **good**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very high standards and very good achievement are brought about by very effective teaching
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are excellent and they work very hard in cramped conditions
- Assessment is very well used to support learning and inform pupils how well they are doing
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory for display work and large group lessons

Commentary

Examination results

104. Results in GCSE examinations in 2003 were very high. Results have been very high for the last three years. The number of pupils gaining the highest grades is also very high.

Standards and achievement

105. By the end of Year 9, pupils have developed very effective drawing skills. They observe with accuracy and use subtle tonal shading to represent form. Their progress from Year 7 is very good. By Year 11 their painting and drawing skills are excellent. They use fine brush control, and exploit their very good knowledge of colour theory. Their drawing is confident and highly competent.

Sketchbooks are very well used. The Year 10 sketchbooks are exceptional. Each page is a rich record of their journey from initial ideas, to explorations and research, through to their final designs. One imaginative page on Pop Art was designed as a room, with various Pop Art pictures and a Lichtenstein style face peering through the window.

Teaching and Learning

106. In Years 7 to 9, pupils benefit from teachers' expertise, and build up their technical skills, so that by the end of Year 9 they reach very high standards. The emphasis on drawing and research, results in pupils developing a very good foundation for examination work. Teachers provide detailed advice on how to improve, and this very effective assessment helps all pupils make rapid progress. In lessons where learning is really well structured, pupils are able to achieve even more. Year 10 pupils made superb progress with their different media studies of a still life, because the teacher set out the learning steps clearly. Pupils enjoy art, behave excellently and work extremely hard, both in lessons and in the extensive amount of independent work they complete. They use computers for research and in manipulating images to explore effects.

Leadership and Management

107. Effective leadership has resulted in making the best of the unsatisfactory accommodation, so that pupils still manage to achieve very well. Nevertheless, the cramped conditions affect the size and scale of work, and the teaching methods used. It is difficult for teachers to use the one whiteboard, and high quality displays are not possible within the room. Outside premises for public exhibitions are used and art work is displayed throughout the school. Although the number of teachers has increased, the workload of teaching is uneven. There are a few lessons where two groups are being taught at once. The department does not have a technician. Whilst standards have risen, little progress has been made since the previous inspection with improving the accommodation or lessening the workload of some teachers. Support from senior staff in the school is unsatisfactory and the subject is undervalued. However, art now has a time allocation in line with national recommendations. Schemes of work are constantly developed to provide very good learning opportunities. Good departmental support is given to non-specialist teachers, but there is no regular formal monitoring of teaching and learning, to allow for the sharing of good practice.

Music

Provision in music is **unsatisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Above average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Poor

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at GCSE are above average and pupils achieve satisfactorily
- The school does not have the resources to implement the National Curriculum in music so pupils underachieve in Years 7 to 9
- Leadership and management of the subject have been unsatisfactory for several years and have resulted in poor progress since the last inspection
- Accommodation is very poor and provides a depressing learning environment
- Pupils progress cannot be evaluated by National Curriculum criteria in Years 7 to 9

Commentary

Examination results

108. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2003 suggested that pupils' attainment at this stage was very high. These assessments indicated much higher standards than were encountered during the inspection and were inaccurate. GCSE results in 2003 were above the national average, but no pupil gained an A* grade.

Standards and achievement

109. Standards in Year 9 are currently below average. They are above average in theoretical musical knowledge, but well below expectation in composing and performing. Overall, pupils are underachieving in Years 7 to 9. Standards in Year 11 are above average. Pupils' accomplishment as practical musicians is well above average, and they have good factual knowledge largely due to the additional tuition they receive. Their achievement is satisfactory.

Teaching and learning

110. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 10 and 11, but unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Teachers have advanced technical knowledge and performance skills but are not all familiar with the requirements of the National Curriculum. GCSE pupils receive constructive advice, carefully tailored for individual pupils and closely linked to examination criteria. Teachers communicate ideas clearly to classes and individuals. In Years 7 and 9, relationships with classes are good, and pupils are keen to learn. Lessons, however, are lacking in musicality and are often dull and mundane. In some lessons, work was of no significance to the non-practising musicians present because there were no classroom instruments available which they could use to put the theory into practice. Teaching is unsatisfactory because tasks do not match the requirements or spirit of the National Curriculum, but tend to be based on basic musical knowledge learned in a vacuum. Work takes little account of the range of ability within each class. Lessons do not have clear objectives that are communicated to pupils at the beginning of a lesson and revisited at the end to gauge progress and guide subsequent planning. Assessment is vague and not related to National Curriculum requirements or levels.

Leadership and management

111. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory because the department has been neglected by senior management for several years. Recent change of personnel as part of a programme to tackle the problems has not yet had full impact on raising standards because there are not enough musical instruments to use in a way that would inspire and motivate pupils. The subject is now carefully organised on a day-to-day basis. The focus has been to raise the status of music as an academic subject and through the performance groups. The academic needs of GCSE pupils are now satisfactorily met, but provision in Years 7 to 9 remains unsatisfactory. Resources for music are very poor. The school does not possess the basic equipment to teach the National Curriculum. An interim scheme of work is being compiled to provide for pupils' needs in Years 7 to 9 but the tasks are not related to actual musical experiences. The accommodation presents an unpleasant and impoverished environment for learning. Line management of the department lacks rigour. It is not linked either to implementing school policies effectively or to providing professional support for an isolated department. No targets are set and no formal monitoring of teaching has taken place this year. Extra-curricular activities are varied and provide good opportunities for the social and cultural development of the participants. Provision is currently well below that described in the last inspection report.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very high by the end of Year 11 and are improving
- Very good teaching is helping all pupils to learn and achieve very well
- Leadership and management are innovative and very effective and have resulted in very good progress
- Pupils' excellent attitudes assist very good learning and achievement
- Extra-curricular activities give excellent opportunities for pupils to extend their learning
- Pupils do not always receive enough assessment guidance to help them improve even further

Commentary

Examination results

112. GCSE results in 2003 were very high. Results have significantly improved since the previous inspection.

Standards and achievement

113. Pupils have average skills in most activities when they enter the school as they have had varying prior experience in sport. Pupils are achieving very well in Year 9, in most activities, because teachers are very knowledgeable and pupils respect their expertise. By the end of Year 11 standards in the core curriculum and for those following the examination course are very high. Pupils respond very well to the choice of activities offered and acquire skills extremely quickly because they have high expectations. The standard achieved by talented team players is very high indeed. Pupils have the opportunity to compete up to national level.

Teaching and learning

114. Teachers demonstrate skills excellently and questioning is very effective in drawing out all pupils' learning and understanding. Teachers modify tasks so that all pupils are pushed to their limit. Pupils learn very well because of extremely well-planned lessons and the high expectations of teachers. Teachers encourage pupils to view one another's work and to help each other. Talented pupils have good opportunities in leading groups in warm-up sessions and play an invaluable part in the thriving inter-house competitions. Good use of digital cameras allows pupils to observe and analyse one another's performance to improve practical assessment. Assessment in the GCSE course is used well to help pupils to check their progress and measure performance against targets, but marking does not always highlight areas for improvement or clearly relate to grades. Pupils outside the examination course are aware of their progress because of the very good school monitoring system, which targets pupils well. Teachers usually review lessons but this is not always well linked to objectives and the aims of lessons are not always fully shared with pupils.

Leadership and management

115. Leadership and management have focused attention strongly on high standards so teachers work to their strengths and can identify the improvements for which they take responsibility. The excellent new sports hall has allowed improvements to the curriculum and extended the extra-curricular programme. Teachers work very well together to create a prestigious department with a very good ethos. Good guidance for teachers is provided in detailed schemes of work but some consistent implementation of literacy, numeracy and citizenship in lessons would give pupils a wider understanding of the impact and value of their learning across the school. The school sport coordinator programme has not been instigated in the area but good links with primaries and other institutions already exist. Standards and facilities have improved since the last inspection and the school has achieved the Sportsmark gold award.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

All pupils attend tutorial lessons and personal, social and health education (PSHE) which cover the National Curriculum requirements for Citizenship. Only one unit was being taught during the inspection. One lesson was seen.

Citizenship

Provision for citizenship is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Above average	Above average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and Learning	No judgement	No judgement

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since the last inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's ethos fosters the idea of community service extremely well
- Pupils have positive attitudes and wish to help others through playing an active role in the community
- Pupils have above average skills in enquiry and communication
- The citizenship programme is not coherent, nor is it made explicit enough in lessons
- Pupils do not know how well they are doing because assessment procedures are not fully in place

Commentary

Standards and achievement

116. Pupils in Year 9 know that citizenship covers helping others and participating in the community. In Year 11, pupils have used their effective enquiry and communication skills to gain good understanding of the effects of discrimination, including racism. They discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the use of closed circuit television, using their enquiry skills to extract key points from newspaper articles. All pupils participate in some of the huge range of activities within the school or local community. They have an outstanding sense of responsibility towards others and expect to play their part. The school council has recently been re-launched and is providing its members with further opportunities to take part in democratic action. However, despite the expectations of the ethos of Adams' Grammar School pupils do not always make connections between their lessons, community activities and the idea of citizenship. Whilst they clearly have all the qualities of excellent citizens, this lack of knowledge affects their achievement in fully understanding the rights and responsibilities explored within the subject requirements.

Teaching and learning

117. There was not enough evidence available during the inspection to make a judgement on teaching and learning. Only one discrete citizenship lesson was observed and no current work was available.

Leadership and management

118. Leadership is providing a clear vision for the development of the subject, and has identified appropriate priorities to ensure that the subject is fully established. Sound schemes of work have recently been written and implemented. Although there are citizenship lessons in each year, contributions from other subjects are not co-ordinated so the impact is only satisfactory as yet. Pupils do not know how well they are doing or how to improve, because assessment is not fully developed.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	10	100	82	50	33	45	33
Business studies	11	91	89	18	32	36	35
Chemistry	18	100	85	44	37	44	35
Economics	6	83	86	17	42	27	37
English Literature	7	100	94	29	38	43	39
French	17	88	85	18	35	32	35
Design and Technology	8	100	89	38	32	41	36
History	7	100	92	57	37	43	38
Mathematics	10	90	74	30	34	33	31
Other social studies	9	100	83	11	33	31	34

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	9	100	96	78	49	104	85
Biology	33	100	92	42	36	88	74
Business studies	28	100	96	57	33	89	77
Chemistry	41	100	94	68	46	101	81
Economics	12	100	96	42	46	85	83
English literature	25	100	99	76	44	102	84
French	13	100	96	62	46	97	83
Design and technology	12	100	95	42	36	82	77
General studies	116	100	90	36	29	81	69
Geography	18	100	97	67	41	96	81
German	7	100	96	43	44	83	82
History	9	100	97	56	41	87	81
Information Technology	10	100	89	70	22	96	64
Mathematics	58	97	93	62	52	90	85

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
Other Sciences	10	100	95	70	40	100	79
Other social studies	13	92	94	39	39	83	78
Physics	48	100	93	56	43	95	79
Religious Studies	10	100	96	70	44	96	82
Sports/PE studies	7	100	95	57	30	103	73

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

All courses were inspected in detail.

English literature

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

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching based on very good subject knowledge is well used to promote learning and enable students to achieve very high standards
- Students' intellectual curiosity, enthusiasm and commitment generated for the subject is a major factor in their achievement
- Very effective leadership and management have resulted in consistently high standards of teaching and learning
- Advice given to students on how to improve is not consistent or specific enough so they do not always know how to improve their work

Commentary

Examination results

119. Results in English Literature were very high in 2002, having risen over the two previous years. Three quarters of students reached higher levels (A and B). Boys and girls attain very high standards. Girls' performance was well above the national picture overall, although the proportion reaching higher grades matched it. Results in 2003 continue at an exceedingly high level.

Standards and achievement

120. At AS level, students acquire rapidly a working knowledge of key themes and characters in plays they read. For example, a group studying Arthur Miller's 'Death of a Salesman' demonstrated a very good grasp of the play in their dramatic improvisations. At A level, students express themselves with zest and fluency. They produce very mature, well-informed and subtle accounts of modern and Victorian novels and poetry. Their work on Chaucer reveals the fruits of very good teaching. It has enabled students to acquire a secure historical and social background, as well as to explore in detail the way characters grow in complexity. Standards of boys and girls are similar. Students achieve very well because they apply themselves energetically to lessons, and take great care to produce thorough and well-considered written assignments.

Teaching and learning

121. Teachers use their high levels of academic authority to make the work interesting for students. They draw in their interest and involvement in practical acting activities, which are a particularly strong feature. Lively, well-focused questions keep pushing forward student understanding and provoke their interest. The effect of well-planned practical activities to explore dramatic texts, or to make presentations based on independent research, is that students build a very confident knowledge of the set texts. It is based on a subtle combination of emotional and intellectual understanding, which teachers take care to foster in their astute blend of coaching and questioning in class. Written assignments are marked conscientiously, and strengths identified helpfully. At the same time, advice given to students on how to improve is not always spelled out clearly and consistently.

Leadership and management

122. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. They have ensured very good teaching at all levels, which is consistently successful in stimulating students to do their best. Documentation is of high quality and there is a shared vision for improvement.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

123. Standards of literacy across the subjects are excellent. They feature extremely high standards of discussion, questioning and debate in lessons, used well to extend and consolidate knowledge. Standards of writing are excellent, exemplified by very effective note taking skills and the production of well-structured written assignments.

French

Provision in French is **very good**.

Standards	Well above average
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and Learning	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are high because of very effective teaching
- Year 13 students have very good speaking skills and use the language freely
- Work experience placements in France have helped to boost students' confidence
- The Year 12 class is large and this makes it harder for teachers to give students individual attention

Commentary

Examination results

124. Examination results have improved steadily in recent years. In 2002 results were well above the national average. All students passed and almost two-thirds achieved A or B grades. In 2003 results were at a similar high standard.

Standards and achievement

125. Year 13 students speak a great deal of French in lessons and have built up sufficient confidence to use the language between themselves as the main means of communication and to ask questions or politely disagree with the teacher. This is a very good achievement. They also approach demanding listening and reading tasks with confidence. Year 12 students are developing very good comprehension writing skills, read aloud with good accents and respond very well to questions.

Teaching and learning

126. Teachers speak excellent French and use it almost exclusively in the classroom and this is a key factor in the high standards seen. Students' attitudes are very positive because they are thoroughly engaged in lessons and interested in topics such as the euro and the wearing of headscarves in French schools. The Year 12 class is large, and teachers do not use a wide enough range of strategies to make sure that all students get enough opportunities to develop their confidence in speaking. Homework is well planned and imaginative use is made of the Internet to bring an up-to-date cultural perspective to the subject. The French assistant also plays an important role in this respect.

Leadership and management

127. There is a clear vision for driving up standards and very effective management is ensuring this is achieved. Standards are now higher when compared to the previous inspection, especially in terms of the proportion of higher grades achieved. The introduction of work experience placements in France is a good initiative and has helped to boost students' confidence with the language. Students are given effective support materials to supplement their textbooks and these materials are often closely linked to examination requirements, helping students to get the best possible grades.

German

Provision in German is **good**.

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Skilful and well-prepared teaching combined with very effective management ensures pupils achieve well and standards continue to rise
- Work experience placements in Germany have helped to boost students' confidence
- Students gain a good understanding of contemporary Germany through the use of the Internet and working with the language assistant
- Year 13 students answer questions well, but are less confident when it comes to initiating and sustaining conversations

Commentary

Examination results

128. Since the last inspection standards in German have varied from year to year, sometimes they are close to the national average and in other years they are well above. There is no clear trend. In 2002 all students passed and results were average. In 2003 results were better with three quarters of students gaining A or B grades. In both years the number of entries was relatively small.

Standards and achievement

129. In work seen, standards are above average. Year 13 students can understand some complex language about the topic of unemployment and are able to answer questions in extended sentences with good style. Comprehension skills are very good because students are constantly hearing excellent German from their teachers and also reading demanding authentic texts, which

enables them to achieve well. In comparison to French, students are less confident when it comes to starting and maintaining conversations with each other and the teachers. In Year 12, students were able to bring together material from several sources and create their own dialogues on the topic of drugs. They have already made good progress from GCSE. All students speak clearly and with good accents.

Teaching and learning

130. Teachers use German almost exclusively in the classroom, helping to develop and extend students' oral skills. Good use is made of ICT as a source of authentic, contemporary materials. In Year 12, use of role play and group work helps students to learn from one another, and work creatively with the new language material. Lessons are well prepared and students are provided with helpful support materials. Students concentrate exceedingly well and have a studious approach to their work.

Leadership and management

131. As a result of very effective management, the provision for German in the sixth form has improved in a number of areas since the last inspection. The introduction of work experience placements in Germany is a very good initiative and students have benefited significantly from this. Good quality support materials now guide students in their preparation for examinations. The provision of a foreign language assistant is helping further to develop students' oral skills and to extend their understanding of contemporary issues.

MATHEMATICS

Mathematics was inspected in detail and one lesson of further mathematics was sampled. In the lesson seen, standards were very high. Very effective teaching used very good subject knowledge to ensure that students achieved extremely well.

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very effective teaching involves great enthusiasm and really good subject knowledge
- The very good leadership and management have ensured significant improvement
- There is a wide range of course opportunities on offer, including the very good provision for students to study mathematics at the highest levels
- All students have very good results at GCSE but some have difficulty with the courses and the school does not have a clear policy for deciding when it is in the best interests of the students to continue

Commentary

Examination results

132. Results in 2002 were above average for both boys and girls.

Standards and achievement

133. Standards are above average although the high levels attained in Year 11 are not carried over universally into the sixth form. This is because some students continue into the second year when their eventual results are likely to be low, whilst other students who are mathematically gifted are able to attain the highest possible standards. Students studying further mathematics achieve exceptional standards.

Teaching and learning

134. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and approach the work with an enthusiasm which rubs off on the students. Some teachers make a real effort to enrich the curriculum content by introducing work beyond the syllabus or which provides even further enhancement. This practice is not widespread and could be used to greater effect in many lessons. Assessment of work is rigorous, students know what is expected of them and teachers provide extra support and constant practice to ensure that students reach the best levels. Students have very positive attitudes to their learning they appreciate the enthusiasm and commitment of staff and respond well by working extremely hard and achieving very well even if the course is not well matched to their needs.

Leadership and management

135. The department is very well led and managed. There is a good range of courses on offer, and the success of the school in Year 11 ensures that the number of students wanting to take mathematics in the sixth form is high. There is the same culture of continuous improvement that is seen in the main school and as a result, improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

136. Standards of numeracy in the sixth form are high. Students apply their skills well across the curriculum. Students effectively use mathematics in a very wide range of other subjects. The mathematical background of the students is such that competence can be 'taken as read' in all subjects and is therefore used effectively whenever appropriate.

SCIENCE

Physics, biology and chemistry were the focus of the inspection. One lesson of geology was sampled. In the lesson seen, standards were very high. Very effective, well-resourced teaching excited and drew in student interest through practical examples and well-focused questioning. Very good achievement ensued from this because all students' minds were stretched fully.

Biology

Provision in biology is **very good**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Not reported in last inspection

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well due to very good enthusiastic teaching and their excellent attitudes to study
- Very effective management ensures a consistent approach to teaching
- Insufficient use is made of ICT to aid students' learning and students do not use the laboratories enough so their practical skills are less fully developed
- Regular testing and very good marking help students to improve

Commentary

Examination results

137. Results in the 2002 were well above average and have been maintained for three successive years. Girls performed better than boys.

Standards and achievement

138. Standards seen are well above the national average. Students develop a very good understanding of biological processes, such as the cardiac cycle, and use scientific vocabulary confidently and accurately. Achievement over the two years is very good.

Teaching and learning

139. Lessons are planned very well and include a range of activities to make learning enjoyable and keep students motivated to work. Teachers have a very good command of their subject and can respond quickly and accurately to students' queries and comments. Work is marked regularly and includes detailed comments that help students to improve. Students have excellent attitudes to their work and can turn to their teachers for extra individual help. Their performance is well monitored and their test scores are analysed to target individual support. The subject is enriched by entering for national competitions and by providing regular dissection demonstrations.

Leadership and management

140. A new head of department and three new teachers have recently been appointed. The department is run very efficiently. Policies have been updated and resources to aid revision and improve examination technique have been produced. Detailed schemes of work support teaching and learning exceedingly well. Teaching is well monitored and newly qualified teachers receive good support. Good practice is effectively shared through regular formal and informal meetings and a programme of lesson observations. ICT is not yet used well to enhance teaching and learning but suitable plans and resources are in place to improve this provision. Too few opportunities for practical work, due to insufficient time in laboratories because of the small number available, mean that students' experimental skills develop less quickly. Technical support is well organised and makes the best use of cramped preparation areas and limited storage facilities to support teaching efficiently. The number of students studying biology has risen sharply over the past three years.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **very good**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' well above average standards and consistent success at examinations are a result of very good teaching
- Very good management has resulted in very good progress since the last report
- The range of teaching approaches used is limited, in part because of accommodation problems, and this restricts students' learning opportunities

Commentary

Examination results

141. Examination results in recent years have been consistently high, either well above average or very high. Results in 2002 were well above average and were significantly better than in most of students' other subjects. Results improved even further in 2003.

Standards and achievement

142. Standards at the end of Year 13 are well above average, for example, in the understanding of heats of reaction, trends in the Periodic Table and volumetric calculations. Students' achievement is very good when compared to their wide range of abilities at the start of the course.

Teaching and learning

143. Teaching is very good. Teachers have an excellent knowledge of their subject. Explanation is very clear and well-structured. Questioning is used effectively to check and probe students' understanding. Concepts are developed really well through a combination of teacher explanation, questioning, written activities and practical work. Effective use is made of homework. This is marked regularly and good feedback is given to students on how to improve. Valuable support is given to students having difficulties with topics. As a result students learn and achieve very well. The range of teaching styles and approaches to new initiatives is limited and there is not enough use of independent work, research and ICT to challenge students more and develop their key skills.

Leadership and management

144. There is a clear vision of how to improve teaching, learning and standards further by identifying and sharing best practice. There is at present too little opportunity to observe good practice. Standards have risen significantly since the last inspection. Laboratory accommodation is unsatisfactory because there are not enough rooms and this restricts learning opportunities for students.

Physics

Provision in physics is **very good**.

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very effective management has improved standards and ensured very good progress
- Teaching is very effective; as a result students learn well and achievement is very good
- Not enough use is made of ICT to promote independent learning

Commentary

Examination results

145. Examination results have been above average for the last five years. Results in 2002 were well above average and were significantly better than in most of the students' other subjects. Results improved further in 2003.

Standards and achievement

146. Standards at the end of Year 13 are well above average in terms of students' understanding of topics such as binding energy in nuclei, simple harmonic motion, pulse code modulation and time division multiplexing. Students' achievement is very good.

Teaching and learning

147. Teachers have high expectations and teaching goes beyond immediate syllabus requirements to challenge students to think. Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent. Explanation is clear, and is continually punctuated with probing questions to develop students' understanding. Lessons are well-structured and concepts are further developed using written questions and practical activities. Very good use is made of homework to extend students' understanding. As a result students make very good progress and achieve very well. The school has been very successful in the Physics Olympiad and was the top state school last year. Accommodation problems limit teaching activities and consequently restrict learning opportunities for students. There is insufficient emphasis on development of key skills involving research, independent work and use of ICT. Students enjoy the subject and value the support they receive from the teachers.

Leadership and management

148. There has been a clear focus on improving standards although the scheme of work is not detailed enough for teachers to share good practice and ensure a wide range of learning opportunities for students. Standards have risen significantly since the last inspection.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

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

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths

- Examination results have been consistently high for several years and continue to improve
- Students achieve very well because teachers pass on their expert knowledge really well
- Effective leadership and management have ensured schemes of work enable students to cover the course requirements well

Commentary

Examination Results

149. Results in 2002 were very high and results in 2003 were similar.

Standards and achievement

150. Students have very good ICT skills. All achieve very well. They have a good understanding of macro design and are able to think logically when solving problems, which evolve during software development. They are able to use database management systems for analytical studies. They have a really good grasp of theoretical concepts, and are able to express their ideas succinctly. All students have acquired highly developed transferable skills. The standard of the coursework is very high and there is real evidence of good systems development and end user testing.

Teaching and learning

151. Teaching is characterised by expert subject knowledge that is passed on very well. Lessons are well planned, interesting and supported by a variety of resources, including recent articles from computer journals. A variety of teaching styles are employed and students are encouraged to discuss topics amongst themselves and to feed back to the teacher. Teachers set clear targets for completion of assignments and students work exceedingly hard to achieve them because they have very good attitudes to working independently. Very good working relationships are based on a mutual respect. Long term planning is in place and there is good use of homework to complete the targets set. Students have a focused approach to their learning and their enjoyment of the subject shows in the quality of their work. Homework questions and coursework are very thoroughly marked with clear guidelines about what students need to do to improve their examination grades.

Leadership and management

152. Clear vision and understanding of the requirements for students in the sixth form has ensured that good progress has been made since the last inspection. The day-to-day management of the subject is effective and the schemes of work used enable students to achieve very well.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

153. Sixth form students have lots of opportunities to use computers in many subjects. Most students own their own computers. They use computers in private study periods effectively, especially for research in other subjects. Boarding students' home use of computers is very good and is a significant factor in improving coursework standards. In biology, physics and chemistry students do not get enough use of computers in lessons which prevents them from using their independent learning skills. In art lessons, ICT is used for critical and historical research, reference gathering, developing design and colouring ideas. Students are encouraged to see ICT as another material, like paint and printing. The usefulness of what can be achieved is often discussed. Students following the music technology course use computers with specialist sequencing software but do not have enough use of machines with up-to-date hardware. Provision has improved since the previous inspection.

HUMANITIES

In addition to the focus subject of geography, lessons in economics, government and politics, history and religious education were also seen. In economics teaching was satisfactory but did not fully draw out students' potential across the range of attainment. Learning was good because students take what they can from lessons and make good, independent use of private study to extend their understanding. Achievement was good for similar reasons. Two lessons of government and politics were seen. Good teaching gave students opportunities to discuss and explore both topical and historical issues, and to develop their own views and opinions. Students learned well from the good subject knowledge of teachers, which was used well to explain issues and clarify students understanding through questioning. This approach resulted in good achievement. In the one history lesson seen standards were very high. Extremely well-planned and tightly structured teaching resulted in very good learning. Students' achievement was very good because their understanding was stretched through precisely-targeted teacher questioning, and assignments which drew out their capabilities fully. Two lessons of religious education were seen. Standards were very high. Excellent and inspirational teaching helped students to understand difficult ideas and acquire new skills. Assessment and review methods really helped students to consolidate and review their learning, underpinning excellent achievement.

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

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

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very high standards because of very effective teaching
- Very effective management has produced good improvement
- Teachers' very good assessment and guidance leads to students being well informed about how they are doing
- There is a limited range of teaching methods which do not always fully engage all students because the best elements of teaching are not shared throughout the department for all to see

Commentary

Examination results

154. Results in 2002 were well above average and the most recent results show a further improvement. Girls' results were slightly better than boys'.

Standards and achievement

155. Students have a clear understanding, a very good depth of knowledge and draw very well on their background knowledge to explain geographical patterns. For example, Year 13 students could give very thorough explanations of the impact of migration on cities in the less developed world. Year 12 students could explain very well the different rates of productivity in different ecosystems. They work well independently and have very good research skills. These are well demonstrated in the recent fieldwork undertaken in mid-Wales, where students collected and analysed data to test hypotheses.

Teaching and learning

156. Teachers have very good knowledge and are very experienced. They train students extremely well in preparation for examinations. The most effective teaching is planned carefully to involve all, through group discussions, and students appreciate the opportunity to share ideas. Teaching is often led by rigorous questioning and no excuses are allowed as students have to explain their answers. In a Year 13 lesson introducing hazards, for example, a quiz provided a very good starter to check students' knowledge of plate tectonics and further well-directed questioning tested their understanding of the links between plate movements and hazards such as volcanic eruptions and earthquakes. Where teaching is so well planned, boys and girls participate equally; at other times teaching becomes more focused on the more articulate boys, and girls become more passive learners. Due to a lack of variety in teaching styles, not all students are fully engaged in some lessons. Marking is thorough against examination criteria and students are given very good guidance as to how to move to the next grade. Teachers do not share their good practice enough within the department.

Leadership and management

157. The department has clear goals. The teachers are used to working together and their teaching is very well managed so that specialist knowledge is used efficiently. Schemes of work lack detail so it is difficult to monitor teachers' coverage of the course.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

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

	Year 13
Standards	Above average
Achievement	Good
Teaching and Learning	Good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since the last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because of the support they receive and their enthusiasm for the subject
- The very good leadership and management have created a tightly knit team of highly knowledgeable teachers and technical support staff that work well together
- A wide range of teaching resources and techniques is used to very good effect to enhance learning
- Teachers' assessment of the gains students make in knowledge and understanding are not sharp enough

Commentary

Examination results

158. Results in 2002 were above average and were similar in 2003. This level of examination success has been consistent for several years.

Standards and achievement

159. Students' skills with a wide range of materials and techniques are good, which is not unusual; what is unusual is their in-depth knowledge and understanding of technology in theory and practice. Students enter the course with a wide range of prior knowledge and skills. They make rapid progress in the subject, in particular in Year 12, where their excitement at going deeply into practical problem-solving is greater. Students achieve well overall in this subject, whether they did their GCSE course at this school or elsewhere; they enjoy it greatly and are very keen to do well. Standards attained by girls are similar to those of the boys.

Teaching and learning

160. Teachers have a great understanding of technology in theory and in practice their highly effective use of a wide range of teaching resources and techniques is a particular strength. Teachers plan lessons so that students work very well together in whole class contexts and in groups, and most become very good at learning on their own by the end of the course. Teachers' assessment of students' practical work is much better than systems for monitoring students' knowledge and understanding because there is not enough focus on exactly what aspects students should learn from week to week.

Leadership and management

161. The department's high quality leadership and management extend to the comparatively small numbers of sixth formers, many of whom also feel (and act as) part of a highly effective team, and all of whom are well supported with resources, guidance and information. Though their numbers are small, the students' needs are recognised and well met. All aspects of the subject have improved since the last inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

This was not a focus for the inspection. Two lessons of music and one of art were sampled. In music, standards were above average. Teaching was very good because it was authoritative and supportive. Questioning and discussion consolidated knowledge well and enabled good learning and achievement to ensue. Standards in the art lesson were very high. Students learned very well because of very effective teaching. The lesson was very well-structured yet flexible enough to accommodate individual students' needs and projects. Very good achievement resulted from the teachers' high expectations, and the well-calibrated individual guidance and support given to individuals. Poor accommodation prevents good display work.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision for physical education in the sixth form is **excellent**.

	Year 13
Standards	Very high
Achievement	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good

Leadership	Excellent
Management	Excellent
Improvement since the last inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject has improved greatly since the last inspection because of excellent leadership
- Students achieve very high standards in examinations because of the very effective teaching they receive
- Students' attitudes are very good so they work exceedingly hard and achieve very well in lessons
- Marking of work and feedback to students is patchy so students are not always aware of what to do to get better

Commentary

Examination results

162. Results were very high in 2002 and have remained significantly above average since 2000. More male students than female students embarked on the course in 2002 and all students who started the course at A/S level remained on the course to A-level. Results in 2003 were similar.

Standards and achievement

163. Early in Year 12, students can identify definitions and technical terms. Specialist vocabulary is strongly emphasised in all lessons. For example, students understand the factors affecting a sportsman in a major event where spectators have high expectations and were able to relate this well to the final minutes of the recent Rugby World Cup final. Students discuss very well the differences between the role of a teacher and a coach in the learning and improvement of skills and techniques. Year 12 students apply their very good understanding of the history of sport and relate its development well to class, social change, leisure, time and finance. This leads to well-informed discussions in Year 13, with students retaining and extending their learning very well. Students answer questions very well and choose appropriate examples to support their answers often from their own selected sports areas. Students understand how to interpret statistics, analyse graphs, collect data and confirm hypotheses.

Teaching and learning

164. The pace of lessons is rapid and every minute is used effectively. Teachers' expert knowledge enables them to use a variety of teaching methods that rigorously challenge and inspire students. For example, in a Year 13 lesson, students' understanding of the skills and the quality of movement, much derived from a deep understanding of anatomy and physiology, led to excellent problem solving within analyses of strategies to be employed in improving performance. Teaching extends students' thinking really well through very effective questioning and discussion. Students' attitudes to the subject are very good. They appreciate the learning environment of a cooperative joint enterprise. They support their very good learning through supplementing the teaching with their own Internet and document-based research. Teachers marking of work and feedback to students are not consistent so students are not always aware of their grades or what they need to do to improve further.

Leadership and management

165. The department is committed to improving. Examination results have soared and there are high expectations of all students. Students' achievement is enhanced by the careful planning in the course. All teachers are well acquainted with the needs of examinations and regularly attend courses to keep up to date. Extremely effective management has ensured course content is analysed and topics rearranged. Female students are very well integrated into the course and their needs are met extremely well.

BUSINESS

This was not a focus for the inspection. One lesson of business studies was sampled. Standards were well above average. Teaching was **good** because it was stimulating and built on good relationships in the classroom. Learning was good as a result of lively discussions, well-structured to confirm and draw out student understanding. Achievement was **very good** in consequence.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

This was not a focus for the inspection. Two lessons of general studies were sampled, in which standards were **well above average**. Very good teaching and learning took place because teachers interacted positively and constructively with students in discussion. This made the students evaluate and reflect carefully on issues. Students achieved very well because the variety of activities stimulated their interest, and teachers took care that all students were challenged and encouraged to participate fully.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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