

INSPECTION REPORT

BEXLEY GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Welling

LEA area: London Borough of Bexley

Unique reference number: 101462

Headteacher: Mr Roderick MacKinnon

Lead inspector: Brian Rowe

Dates of inspection: 6th – 10th October 2003

Inspection number: 259339

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar (Selective)
School category:	Community
Age range of students:	11-18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1345
School address:	Danson Lane Welling
Postcode:	DA16 2BL
Telephone number:	020 8304 8538
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr A Woodcock
Date of previous inspection:	18 May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Bexley Grammar is a large mixed selective school for students aged 11-18 years, situated in Welling, London Borough of Bexley. The school has language college status and the majority of the students live within a four-mile wide catchment area. The school has been successful in gaining a number of awards for high quality provision. These include: Artsmark Silver, DfES Achievement Award 2002, the Sportsmark Award.2003 and Investors in People status. Currently, the school is at full capacity and is always over-subscribed. Some of the children come from homes that are economically and socially advantaged, but students come from a wide range of social backgrounds. Overall, unemployment in the area is average. There are currently 1345 students on roll, of whom 289 attend the sixth form, making it much larger than an average sized secondary school. The proportion of boys (836) is much larger than girls (509), but varies between years. About 24 per cent of students come from minority ethnic groups, a higher proportion than average, but most are fluent in the English language. There are no refugees or students from a traveller background. About 5 per cent of students receive free school meals, and this proportion whilst below the national average is above the grammar school average. Students' attainment on entry is very high compared to the national average, but not high compared to similar schools. About 38 of the students have special educational needs, eight of whom have been assessed to have a high level of learning difficulty. These proportions are well below average when compared to other secondary schools. Four students have statements for special educational needs, well below the national average.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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31705	John Mason	Team inspector	Music Post-16 German
18888	Jan Boulton	Team inspector	Physical education
23137	Ron Fewtrell	Team inspector	Business education Economics
31688	Brian McGonagle	Team inspector	Art
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Bexley Grammar School is a very effective and improving school that provides very good value for money. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. His clear vision has sustained the school, with an enormous growth in numbers, success in national awards and designation as a specialist language college. Management strategies ensure that teaching, learning and students' achievements are improving through high expectations and self-evaluation that identifies the strengths and areas for development.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school is a harmonious community where students are happy, very well cared for and want to learn.
- The headteacher and senior managers have a clear vision of future developments and provide very effective leadership that is raising standards and improving the curriculum and quality of education. Staff are trained and supported very well.
- Students make very good progress and achieve very high standards throughout the school because of very effective teaching and their very positive attitudes to learning.
- Insufficient use is made of assessment information to plan for the learning of the most able students and ensure they always achieve their full potential.
- The specialist language status has had an outstanding impact in establishing very high standards in foreign languages, promoting an international culture in school and supporting links with the local community.
- Students' personal development is greatly enhanced through an excellent provision of enrichment and extra-curricular activities.
- The overall provision for special educational needs is very effective, but support for the very few students who use English as an additional language is under-developed.

Overall improvements since the last inspection have been very good. The issues identified in the previous inspection have been successfully addressed, with the exceptions of making full use of assessment information and ensuring the provision for collective worship meets statutory requirements.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Year 11 and 13 results

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2000	2001	2002	2002
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A	A	A*	C
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	A	A*	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 students attained at the end of Year 9.*

During the last five years the results from national tests taken at the end of Year 9 indicate standards have been very high (within the top 5 per cent of all schools). The students achieve very well and make very good progress from the time they start in Year 7. Over the last four years, results in English and science have reached a plateau and not enough students achieve the higher levels in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9. In English, mathematics and science a small number of the most able students under-achieve. Results in GCSE examinations have shown a marked improvement over the last five years and are now in the top 5 per cent of all schools. Students in Years 10 and 11 achieve very well and make very good progress. However, a few students do not gain the very highest examination grades because they are not always sufficiently challenged to achieve their full potential. Past difficulties in GCSE information

and communication technology have been overcome and students are now achieving very well in lessons. Results in the sixth form have improved significantly over the last four years and are also in the top 5 per cent of all schools. Students, overall, make very good progress and for a few their achievement is excellent. Throughout the school, students with special educational need achieve very well. Standards in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology are very high.

Students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development throughout the school is very good. Attendance is very good and punctuality is good. Students have very positive attitudes to school. They behave very well and develop very positive relationships with each other and staff.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education provided by the school is very good. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. Arrangements for assessing students' work are good. There are examples of very good and excellent teaching to be found in most departments, but there is still too much unsatisfactory teaching. For a few of the teachers, the students' very positive attitudes and behaviour and high ability masks their lack of achievement and learning.

Several aspects of the overall educational provision are strengths within the school. These include: the breadth of the curriculum, especially for the sixth form; the level of care and support and guidance given to students; the opportunities for extra-curricular and enrichment activities; the links with the community and other schools being developed through language college status. There are no significant weaknesses and the school has a determination to improve all aspects of the education it provides.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality and effectiveness of governance, leadership and management throughout the school are very good. A significant strength is the outstanding leadership and commitment of the headteacher to ensure students and staff aim high. Leadership and management are raising standards effectively. The leadership of middle management is improving through staff training and carefully planned delegation, but the monitoring of teaching and learning by a few subject leaders is not sufficiently rigorous or developed.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have very positive views, and the school's image in the local community is strong. Students hold very positive views about school. They say that there is a safe environment where everyone is respected and treated fairly. They feel that their opinions are heard, valued and acted upon and are positive about the new school council.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- The use made of assessment information for planning lessons more effectively, consequently, improving the weaker teaching and challenging the most able students to achieve their full potential.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of collective worship.

SIXTH FORM SECTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is very good and it is cost-effective. Standards are very high and examination results have improved considerably over the last the last few years. The quality of teaching and learning are very good which ensures students achieve very well. The increasing numbers who enter the sixth form are well supported and guided as a result of caring staff and very good leadership and management.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Overall, standards are very high and examination results have improved significantly in recent years.
- Very good leadership, management and teaching ensure a positive environment for learning and so students achieve very well.
- An excellent curriculum provides a rich range of subjects and students have extensive opportunities to extend their learning and personal development.
- Students have exceptionally positive attitudes to their learning and are fully involved in many aspects of school life.
- Careers education, while adequate, is not sufficiently well planned and co-ordinated.

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
<u>English & modern languages</u>	
English	Provision is very good . Standards are consistently very high. Because of very good teaching and the maturity and enthusiasm of the students, they achieve very well. Leadership and management are also very good.
French	Provision is very good . Recent results have been well above average and overall standards are rising as the subject gains in popularity. Students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching and effective leadership.
German	Provision is very good . There has been a significant increase in numbers of student opting for the course. Teaching is very good, supported by very good leadership and management of the subject. Students' current standards are very high, representing very good achievement.
<u>Mathematics</u>	Provision is very good . Students achieve very well, and attainment in the 2002 and 2003 examinations was well above average. Teaching and learning overall are very good, and vary in individual lessons from good to excellent. Relationships between students and teachers are very good.
<u>Science</u>	
Physics	Provision is good . Examination results are above average. Teaching and learning are good, which leads to good achievement by the students. The subject is well led which promotes good learning.
Chemistry	Provision is very good . Examination results are very good and achievement very high. Teaching is very good and the climate in lessons is calm and conducive to learning. Practical work is used to effectively and facilitated by excellent technician support. Leadership of the subject is very good.

<p><u>Humanities</u></p> <p>Classics</p> <p>History</p> <p>Government and politics</p>	<p>Provision is very good. Examination results are high and standards are well above average as a result of very good teaching. The excellent attitudes of students and very good leadership enable them to achieve very well.</p> <p>Provision is good. Examination results have improved to above average. Teaching and learning are very good and students achieve well. Students have very positive attitudes to their work and relate well to teachers. The good leadership of the subject promotes good learning.</p> <p>Provision is good. Examination results are above average. As a result of good teaching and careful monitoring of their progress, students achieve well. Relationships between students and teachers are very good. The subject is well led, which encourages learning.</p>
<p><u>Business</u></p> <p>Business studies</p> <p>Economics</p>	<p>Provision is good. Standards at AS level have been inconsistent but are high overall. Teaching, learning and achievement are all good and the leadership and management of the subject are very good.</p> <p>Provision is very good. Teaching, learning and achievement are all very good and the subject enjoys committed leadership. Standards attained at A level in 2002 and 2003 are very high.</p>
<p><i>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 college. 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'.</i></p>	

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students' have readily available access to well-informed personal support and guidance from their subject teachers. Whilst there is some good information available for those who ask, the guidance given in the careers education programme is not sufficiently well planned and co-ordinated. Students' views are valued and the school council, under sixth form leadership, has quite recently made a constructive start.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are very good. The recently appointed head of sixth form is providing determined leadership and has a strong commitment to raise standards. Senior staff who are involved in managing the sixth form have a clear vision for future development. This has led to a significant rise of standards in recent years. Students achieve very well, helped by the effective system for monitoring their academic progress by subject teachers and tutors.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are very positive and supportive of the school. In conversations with inspectors, they refuted the negative views identified in the students' questionnaire and are happy that their teachers know and support them well. They feel that they are maturing well because they are now given more opportunities to accept responsibility and to work and research independently. They feel that the school values their views and fully involves them in its life and work. Students would appreciate more specific careers guidance and the inspectors agree with this view.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

During the last few years the results from national tests taken at the end of Year 9 indicate standards have been **very high**¹. Students achieve **very well** and recent results when compared to similar schools are **above average**. Results in GCSE examinations are also **very high** and have shown a marked improvement over the last three years. Students in Years 10 and 11 achieve **very well**. Examination results in the sixth form have risen significantly over the last few years and are **very high**, whilst students achievement is **very good**. Students with special educational needs achieve **very well** in line with other students. There are relatively few barriers that prevent students from learning and raising their achievement.

Years 7–9

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very positive attitudes of the students are a key factor to their achieving high standards and making very good progress.
- Standards in each year are very high and students achieve very well.
- The provision of high quality teaching has a positive impact on raising standards, but there are small numbers of students who under-achieve, particularly some of the most able.
- Standards are rising in line with the national trend of improvement.
- The achievement in mathematics is stronger than English and science.

Commentary

1. The table below indicates that students reach standards that are very high compared to the national average. A significant factor in achieving the very high standards and very good progress is the very positive attitudes of the students to their work and school.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2002

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	39.7 (40.7)	33.3 (33.0)
mathematics	45.2 (45.1)	34.7 (34.4)
science	41.1 (41.0)	33.3 (33.1)

There were 158 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. The school overall has found it difficult to raise the standards of English, mathematics and science, but results have kept pace with the national trend of improvement. The value-added analysis of students' attainment from Year 7 to 9 supports the judgement that students achieve very well. In particular, the mathematics results have improved over time because of very good teaching and very good leadership and management of the department. Over the last four years, results in English and science have reached a plateau and not enough students achieve the higher levels in the national tests taken at the end of Year 9. In English, mathematics and science a small number of students under-achieve, especially amongst the most able. The school has made improving teaching a priority for development and recent initiatives are beginning to impact on students' learning and achievement. There was little difference between the attainment of boys and girls or amongst students from different ethnic backgrounds.

¹ Very high in this context means results were in the top 5 per cent of all schools nationally.

- In virtually all subjects students achieve well and in most their achievement is very good. The exception is religious education in Years 7 to 9, where although achievement is satisfactory, the quality of teaching varies too much between classes. Students with special education needs achieve very well as the school helps them to overcome their barriers to learning.

Years 10 and 11

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are very high in comparison with the national average and students achieve at a higher level than their prior attainment at the end of Year 9 would indicate.
- Standards are rising at a faster rate than the national trend of improvement.
- The proportion of students gaining the highest examination results is lower than expected in a few subjects, but notably in information and communication technology.
- GCSE results indicate that girls out perform boys but to a lesser extent than nationally; boys' performance and achievement are impressive.

Commentary

- The table below indicates that students reach standards that are very high when compared to the national average. The proportion of students gaining the highest grades is close to the grammar school average.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2002

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	100 (95.5)	50 (48)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	100 (98.7)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	51.8	39.8

There were 195 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- The students continue to make very good progress overall and their level of achievement is above average compared to similar schools. This is due to very effective teaching and the students' positive attitudes to their work. However, a few students do not gain the very highest examination grades because they are not always sufficiently challenged to achieve to their full potential. Past difficulties in information and communication technology have been overcome and students are now achieving very well in lessons.

Sixth form

Standards in post-16 examinations have been very high and both male and female students achieve **very well** overall. The results have improved significantly over the last few years.

Commentary

- Students have achieved very well during the last few years with females out-performing males in examinations. There was no evidence of differences in standards between the genders during the inspection. Students are confident about their current progress and appreciate the high level of support given by their teachers that ensures their success.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students have **very good** attitudes to their learning. They behave **very well** and develop relationships that are **very good**. Attendance rates are **very high** throughout the school. Students' spiritual, moral social and cultural development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall, because the school places a high regard on the importance of encouraging students' personal development.
- Cultural development is excellent, because of the school's international links.
- Students' very good attitudes to work are a significant reason why they do so well.
- Behaviour is very good and students are mature and responsible.
- Attendance is very high; rates are within the top 10 per cent of schools in the country.
- Exclusions are very rare because students behave very well.

Commentary

Attendance

7. Students attend school regularly and overall punctuality is good. Parents appreciate the benefits of a high quality education and support their children well so they hardly miss a day of school. As a result, attendance is very high. Another reason attendance is so high, is because the school does not authorise parents to take holidays during term time. Parents accept this and rarely take holidays in term time.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002 / 3

Authorised absence	
School data:	4.3
National data:	7.8
Grammar average	4.9

Unauthorised absence	
School data :	0.2
National data:	1.2
Grammar average	0.0

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

Exclusions

8. The school makes sensible use of its sanctions, and exclusions are used as a last resort when other support has not worked. Students and staff are very clear about when exclusions are used.

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
Mixed – any other mixed background
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Black or Black British – any other Black background
Parent/student preferred not to say

No of students on roll
906
12
21
11
11

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
28	0
1	0
2	0
1	0
1	0

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

9. Students are very highly motivated and eager to learn, because of the positive ethos for learning. This is a key reason why they make very good progress. Their behaviour is very good overall, but when learning is not challenging some can lose concentration and misbehave. The school rarely excludes students because of poor behaviour. Students with

special educational needs make very good improvements in their attitudes and behaviour. A number have experienced problems at other schools, but at Bexley Grammar they receive very effective support that enables them to improve their attitudes and behaviour and make very good progress. Students are conscientious and work hard, enjoy school and want to do well. This is shown in the very high numbers attending the extensive range of extra-curricular activities and taking part in overseas visits. In conversation with inspectors about how the school deals with bullying, students were universally complimentary about procedures and felt bullying was not an issue. They especially value the support provided from sixth form peer mentors. This contradicted the findings of the student questionnaire. Inspectors found that bullying is handled well and is not an issue.

10. Relationships are strong and supportive, based upon students who like their teachers and teachers who have a genuine interest in their students. There is a positive friendly atmosphere in school, and a very high degree of racial harmony, with mixed race friendships very common. One reason why students develop into mature and responsible individuals is because of the wide range of opportunities they are provided with. Of special note, and an area of outstanding practice, are the schools' international links. Many of these have been forged over the last year because of the school's work as a specialist language college. Inspectors view their work in promoting international relations and thereby fostering excellent cultural opportunities, as an area of outstanding practice. Becoming a language college has been a catalyst for many exciting initiatives with schools in other countries. This enrichment encompasses students' learning at least two different languages, whilst including Chinese, Japanese, German, and Spanish being offered as taster courses in the sixth form.
11. During an 'International Day' held last term, the whole school celebrated the culture and heritage from around the world, whilst raising money for one of two schools they support in underprivileged countries. There is an impressive array of visits, exchanges and email contacts with schools abroad, and a significant proportion of students are involved. These opportunities promote excellent cultural development.

Sixth form

The attendance and attitudes of the sixth form students are **very good**. Their behaviour is **exemplary**, conforming to school rules and readily accepting responsibility.

Commentary

12. Sixth form students have exceptionally good attitudes to their work. They have high aspirations, know where they are going and are determined to get there. Their behaviour is exemplary and they are very good role models for younger students. They play a pivotal role in school life, by motivating and befriending younger students, acting as counsellors for those with problems, leading assemblies, working as house captains and helping in class. They really enjoy this kind of involvement.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is **very good**. The quality of the different aspects of this provision varies. Several of the aspects are significant strengths within the school. These include: the breadth of the curriculum, especially for the sixth form; the level of care and support and guidance given to students; the opportunities for extra-curricular and enrichment; the links with the community and other schools being developed through language college status. There are no significant weaknesses and the school has a determination to improve all aspects of the education it provides.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching is **very good**.

The quality of students' learning in all years is **very good**.

The quality of assessing students' work is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The high proportion of excellent and very good teaching is a significant strength.
- The relatively high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching.
- Overall, teaching motivates students and supports them to achieve very well.
- Teaching promotes very positive attitudes and personal development in students.
- There is insufficient attention in some subjects to matching work to meet the needs of students with different abilities, especially ensuring the most able are sufficiently challenged.
- Regular school reviews ensure that senior staff are aware of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning, but there is insufficient monitoring by some subject leaders.
- The ineffective teaching of information and communication technology in Years 10 and 11 during the last three years has been successfully addressed and is now very much improved.

Commentary

13. The overall quality of education was judged as good at the last inspection and this has improved considerably to become very good. During the last seven years important strategic decisions have been made to raise standards, and improving teaching and learning has been a main focus for staff development. Effective management has ensured that improvement to teaching and learning has been accomplished in many subjects and examination courses. The students are positive about the school and the teaching they receive. They are very well behaved and have very positive attitudes to their work. The school makes a positive contribution to the students' personal development.
14. Inspectors judge the quality of teaching and learning from a wide range of evidence, that includes observing lessons, an analysis of past test and examination results, a scrutiny of students' work, talking to students about their work and analysing school data and documentation. During the inspection 180 lessons were observed. The observations confirmed the schools' own self-evaluation that overall teaching and learning are very good. A summary of the teaching is shown in the table below.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 180 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
15 (8%)	78 (43%)	52 (29%)	23 (13%)	12 (7%)	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.

15. The above table indicates a high proportion of very good and excellent teaching, and also a relatively high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching. During the inspection the most effective teaching was observed in the Years 7 –to 9 and the sixth form. In these years, teaching and learning are frequently very good and excellent, but there are still examples of unsatisfactory lessons. Teaching was very good overall in Years 10 and 11 as half of the lessons observed were either very good or excellent. However, five of the 47 lessons observed were unsatisfactory. The majority of unsatisfactory teaching is related to insufficient planning to match work to the students ability, low expectations for some of the most able students so that too many do not make sufficient progress, lessons that lacked pace and rigour and where learning was too slow. In only one lesson was poor student behaviour the reason for unsatisfactory learning. Some of the unsatisfactory teaching was because inexperienced teachers had not yet fully developed their skills for managing

students' behaviour, however, some of the unsatisfactory lessons were taught by long established teachers. In a few subjects there is insufficient internal review leading to strategies for improvement, but in many this is a very strong feature. There are many examples of very good teaching to be found in all departments. Teaching and learning in information and communication technology in Years 10 and 11 has been ineffective for the last three years, an issue that several parents raised with the inspectors. Recent staff changes and successful action taken by senior managers has rectified this situation and teaching and learning are now very good.

16. Students have very positive attitudes towards their work. Most have highly developed learning skills and they readily conform to school rules and conventions. For many, their literacy and numeracy skills are very high for their age. Subsequently, their keenness, very good behaviour and high levels of attainment may mask any underachievement from the less discerning teacher. This results in lessons being taught that are just satisfactory or unsatisfactory, because not all students make the best progress and the highest level of achievement is not reached. This is an issue the senior managers are fully aware of and are finding ways to support teachers and improve the quality of teaching and learning through a system of regular reviews and in-service training opportunities.
17. Students with special educational needs are mostly taught in main school classes. They benefit from the same high quality teaching as other students. Most teachers are very aware of the needs and difficulties of the students with special educational needs. However, some teachers do not make effective use of the information provided by the special educational needs department and fail to use the strategies suggested. The few students with English as an additional language who need specific support, receive good specialist teaching from the local education authority's language service. The progress in all aspects of their language development is recorded in detailed reports.

Sixth form

The quality of teaching in Years 12 and 13 is **very good**.

The quality of students' learning in Years 12 and 13 is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In a high proportion of lessons teaching and learning are very good or excellent.
- Teaching, learning and standards are improving in many subjects.
- Regular monitoring of teaching and learning has identified weaknesses that are being systematically addressed.
- Assessment is used very well in the sixth form.

Commentary

18. During the inspection 66 sixth form lessons were observed. Over 10 per cent were excellent, over 40 per cent were very good, 30 per cent were good, 12 per cent satisfactory and 6 per cent (4 lessons) were unsatisfactory. A scrutiny of students' work and talking with students confirmed this very good level of teaching and learning. The teaching has improved over the years because of the intervention of the senior management team who monitor the quality of teaching and learning and the support given to students on a regular basis. This improved teaching is having a direct impact on students' achievement and standards of work. Regular feedback on how well students are doing is provided, and teachers are very appreciative of this drive to raise standards.

Assessment

The quality of assessing students' work is **good** in Years 7 to 11 and is **very good** in the sixth form.

Commentary

19. Assessment is good with some very strong features. The school has invested much time and resources into developing and promoting assessment procedures and they make an effective contribution to improving standards. A strong feature is the target setting that is based on extensive student performance data. Each department is provided with a detailed, progressive profile of every student's achievements and their indicative attainment levels. The use of this data for monitoring and tracking students' progress is good in most subjects; and this is supplemented by a system of academic monitoring and mentoring. In almost every subject the marking and assessment of work results in students being aware of what they need to do to improve. Overall, there is still some scope for subjects to relate their assessments more closely to National Curriculum levels and GCSE grades, particularly in English. This will involve students even more in the assessment process and help them to evaluate their own work and progress. One area for further development is the use of assessment data for planning lessons to meet the needs of specific groups of students, especially those of the most able. Assessment is used very well in the sixth form. Students know the subjects' assessment objectives and grade descriptors and have frequent discussions with their teachers about their own progress.

The curriculum

The overall quality of the curriculum across the school is **very good**. The overall quality of the curriculum to meet the needs of students in Years 7 to 11 is **good**. The opportunity for enrichment, including out-of-school activities is **excellent**. Accommodation is good, although there is a shortage of space due to the expansion in student numbers. The quality and quantity of accommodation and resources to meet the curriculum needs of Years 7 to 13 are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The modern languages curriculum is excellent.
- The programme for activities outside lessons is excellent, particularly in physical education, modern languages and the arts.
- There is very good access to information and communication technology outside lessons.
- The school does not meet the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship, although it does provide a positive and worthwhile assembly experience for students.

Commentary

20. The curriculum overall provides a very good range of opportunities to meet the needs of the students. Statutory requirements are met in all regards except in relation to providing a daily act of collective worship. The curriculum is particularly strong in modern languages, where there is access to three different European languages. The overall structure of the curriculum is coherent and meets the needs of students. The match of the teaching staff to the requirements of the curriculum is very good, and excellent support is provided by non-teaching staff, particularly in the areas of technical support for science and information and communication technology. Review and development of the curriculum in response to changing needs are very effective. The curriculum for students with special educational needs is very good. The provision required in any special educational needs statements is met in full.
21. There are excellent opportunities through extra-curricular activities to enrich the curriculum. This includes informal support for students from many departmental staff after lessons,

clubs, activities and field trips. Students have very good access to information and communication technology at lunchtime and after school. There are many opportunities for students to enter for competitions, for example poetry writing and mathematics. The range of sporting activities and those provided by the modern languages department and in the broad area of the arts are excellent. A recent musical event was completely produced from composition to production by the school.

22. Overall accommodation and resources are good. There is a shortage of accommodation in some areas due to the ongoing expansion in student numbers, but there are five new buildings and more in prospect. The new sports hall and modern languages accommodation and resources are very good.

Sixth form

The overall quality of the curriculum to meet the needs of students in Years 12 and 13 is **excellent**.

Students have a choice of a very wide range of A levels, as well as an interesting range of additional courses, particularly in non-European languages.

The opportunity in the sixth form for enrichment, including out-of-school activities is **excellent**.

The quality and quantity of accommodation and resources to meet the needs of the sixth form curriculum are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students have access to a wide range of examination courses.
- Curricular and enrichment opportunities are very broad and this is much appreciated by the students.
- There is no daily act of collective worship.

Commentary

23. The curriculum in the sixth form is excellent. Statutory requirements for religious education are met through the general studies programme. There are exceptional opportunities to expand studies to non-European languages, as well as choosing from an impressive range of A level courses. The range of activities available to students in physical education is excellent. Support for the curriculum, for example through private study arrangements and the teaching of the key skills of literacy, numeracy and communication are very good. The curriculum is constantly reviewed and updated. For example, the school is planning to introduce the International Baccalaureate to run alongside existing courses.

24. There are excellent opportunities through extra-curricular activities to enrich the curriculum, and to provide for the students' personal development. Sixth form students play a full part in most of the activities enjoyed in the main part of the school. In particular, opportunities for additional activities are very good in English, art, geography, information and communication technology, modern languages, and music.

Care, guidance and support

The overall effectiveness to ensure students' care, welfare, health and safety is very good. There are good systems for supporting students with advice and guidance about their work. The involvement of students through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is satisfactory and becoming more established with a new school council.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good support for the needs of students within a caring environment.
- Good monitoring of students' progress and personal development, especially through teacher mentors and help from sixth formers.

- Good transition arrangements for Year 7 students.
- The support for students with special educational needs is very good, but support for the few students who use English as an additional language is under-developed.

Commentary

25. Students are cared for very well. Their individual learning and personal needs are known to staff who take a genuine interest and help them succeed. The care and welfare provided for students with special educational needs is very good. The school is very alert to addressing and supporting the behavioural and emotional difficulties faced by many of these students. A particularly important factor in this aspect is that the students themselves are extremely appreciative of the support given to them that enables them to overcome their difficulties and achieve very well. However, the targets in the individual education plans are not sufficiently precise to ensure that all teachers are able to address the needs of every individual student. Students with English as an additional language are supported well when they are withdrawn from a different lesson each week. The school takes care to ensure the students make up the work that is missed. However, the overall provision for the very few students with English as an additional language is under-developed. This is because the detailed information provided by the specialist language teacher is not disseminated to all teachers. Therefore, they are unable to give precise support, as they are unaware of the specific and general language needs of these students.
26. There are robust health and safety systems in place, with an effective partnership between senior staff and governors to ensure statutory requirements are met. Child protection procedures are secure and there has been recent staff training. The school keeps a diligent check on how students are progressing. This is demonstrated by the careful way subject teachers support their students, combined with regular checking from form tutors to find out how students are getting on with their work. Students learn in a caring, supportive environment, characterised by very good relationships with staff.
27. Particularly strong aspects of the schools' support systems include teachers who act as mentors to individual students needing extra support. This is working well and has meant identified Year 11 students gaining significantly higher GCSE grades than they were originally predicted. The mentoring system has now been extended to certain students in every year group, because of its success. Another well-used strand of the mentoring system comes from sixth formers, who work as peer mentors to help students overcome problems. Students value the help and friendship they provide.
28. The school has made an encouraging start in formally consulting students and responding to their views. These are now being channelled through a new school council, although the school have always considered students views on an informal basis, especially through the work of the environment committee. There is a very effective and well managed 'house' system which creates a vertical link through the school community and provides many opportunities for students of all ages to take on leadership roles. The system reinforces the strong community ethos of the school and ensures that all students are involved in enrichment activities through an extensive range of cultural, sporting and charitable activities. In addition, sixth form students relish the opportunity to take responsibility when organising inter-house events for younger students.

Sixth form

The quality of providing support, advice and guidance for sixth form students is **good**.
The involvement of students through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is **good**.

Commentary

29. The quality of support and guidance is good. Students acknowledge this and speak with gratitude about the help they receive from teachers. There are very supportive relationships from subject teachers who are very willing to provide extra help and are easily accessible to the sixth form students. The careers education programme is not sufficiently well planned. Whilst there is a good amount of information to hand if students seek it out, careers advice is not part of a structured programme. Student's views are actively sought and acted upon, and this is a developing aspect of school life. They have been key players in setting up the new school council and Year 12 students have recently been surveyed to find out how they are settling into the sixth form.

PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS, OTHER SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITY

Parents are extremely pleased with the schools' work and the partnership is **good**. The quality of links with the local community are good and a developing aspect of the school's work. Links with schools and colleges are **good** overall, and particularly strong with local primary schools and schools in other countries.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are delighted with the school and hold it in high regard.
- Becoming a language college has been the catalyst for a range of new adult learning, benefiting parents and the community.
- There are very good contacts with schools in other countries and very good language curriculum partnerships with three main primary schools.
- Links with further and higher education colleges and local businesses are satisfactory and an improving aspect of the school's work.

Commentary

30. The school's image in the local community is strong and student numbers have increased over the last five years. Parents are extremely pleased with the school and highly supportive of its work and their children's education. Nearly every parent attends parent's evenings and financial support for the schools' work is impressive.
31. Relationships with parents are good. Termly newsletters are high quality, giving parents a good flavour of all the exciting opportunities on offer. The summer edition, produced as a colour magazine, is particularly interesting. Becoming a language college has created some exciting opportunities for parents to benefit from free summer language schools. These were extremely popular and oversubscribed.
32. The community has benefited too from the school gaining language college status. A range of evening classes are now offered at the school, with more planned for the future. The school has made this possible because it has been able to offer adult education providers with subsidised rates. This includes the school subsidising evening classes in community languages. The art department make a concerted effort to take part in community life. One highlight has been a recent exhibition of Year 12 work in nearby Eltham Palace.
33. Links with primary schools are very good. Year 6 pupils are particularly benefiting because the school is teaching languages (French, German and Spanish) in five local primary schools. A successful pilot programme is leading onto regular lessons, soon to start.

Primary students have also benefited from a summer language and literacy school. Links between primary schools and the art departments are very strong and talented primary students attend a Saturday school each week. There are several good and growing contacts with schools abroad, creating opportunities for students to visit different countries and opening up a range of exciting opportunities for international relations.

34. Although local businesses supported the schools' successful bid for language college status, there are few ongoing business and industry partnerships. The school recognises this area as one it wishes to develop in the future. School links are also more limited, and the new head of sixth form has started to make some initial contacts in this connection.
35. The special educational needs department has very good links with a range of partners including previous schools, the local education authority's behaviour support service and the Connexions service. Parents of students with statements of special educational needs are very well involved in their child's education, but those with children at other stages of intervention are not fully involved.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management throughout the school is **very good**.

The headteacher provides **outstanding** leadership.

Other key staff with responsibility provide **very good** leadership.

The effectiveness of management is **very good** throughout the school.

The overall quality of governance is **very good**.

The school has relatively few barriers to learning and both promotes and capitalises well on the positive attitudes of students.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership, commitment and vision of the headteacher are major contributory factors to school improvements.
- The impressive whole-school improvement planning ensures that self-evaluation permeates throughout the school and forges strong links between the many elements of management.
- There is some inconsistency in the skill and rigour of middle managers in their monitoring of teaching, learning and the quality of education.
- The priority that the school and governors place upon recruiting and deploying staff has enabled the philosophy of continual improvement to become a reality.
- Performance management and induction procedures for new teachers and in-service training for all staff are very well organised and effective.
- The school uses financial planning effectively and applies principles of best value well.
- The school does not analyse data sufficiently well in relation to the achievement of different groups of students.
- The governing body is organised well and has a clear vision of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

Commentary

Leadership

36. The overall quality of leadership is very good throughout the school. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. His clear vision has sustained the school, with an enormous growth in numbers, success in national awards and designation as a specialist language college. Under his guidance, the school's improvement plan offers a rigorous conceptual model for development. Key decisions on curriculum, finance, professional development, resources, staffing, and management structures grow from and feed into this plan. Consistently good appointments have created a strong and focused senior team. The

quality leadership of middle management is improving through staff training and carefully planned delegation.

37. The strategy of the leadership team is both supportive and challenging, responding to the personal needs of staff, but not allowing this to conflict with the concentration on student achievement. The headteacher's commitment to teaching religious education to Year 7 students helps model the dedication expected of all teachers in the school.

Management

38. The management of the school is very good. A significant strength of the whole-school improvement plan is that it is not merely a document, but results in a very effective process that has a major impact upon improving the school. Because of the school's improvement planning process, the school continuously evaluates its effectiveness. The school has been extremely successful in establishing clear and tangible links between the whole-school and departmental targets. An innovative feature is a department's ability to acquire additional time to manage new curriculum initiatives through a system of bidding that is closely related to agreed priorities for development. Through a process of review and self-evaluation the senior staff ensure that the most suitable priorities for development are identified for the school. Each subject and year team then produces its own plan that illustrates how they will contribute to and meet those priorities. The on-going monitoring of the school's effectiveness, the performance management procedures, the provision for staff development and the allocation of funding are inextricably linked to the school's priorities. This is a very effective system that impacts upon the quality of the work of every teacher. As a result the standards and achievements of students are very high, and the overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. However, whilst this aspect of self-evaluation has improved considerably since the last inspection there remains too much unsatisfactory teaching. This is because the quality of monitoring teaching and learning by some middle managers is not sufficiently rigorous or developed. This detracts from the overall quality of leadership and management and in particular the achievement of some students.
39. Extremely effective decisions have been taken to recruit, retain and deploy staff at all levels of management. The development of teaching and learning is a central focus of the school's provision that enriches and broadens the repertoire of teachers' skills and effectiveness. An exciting programme of in-service training for staff successfully dovetails the needs of the school with those of individual teachers. Whilst the school has good assessment systems to monitor performance data it does not, systematically, use that information to identify the relative achievements of students of different ability in lessons.
40. The financial management of the school has been strengthened since the previous inspection and there is now an effective system in place for making informed decisions about school priorities. Financial management is effective and efficient and the finance officer keeps a very firm grip on the spending. The governing body ensures the principles of best value are applied rigorously and pursued by the finance officer and governors' finance committee.

School improvement time (SIT) A first class initiative to promote and facilitate school development.

A unique scheme whereby staff are encouraged to submit a bid, making proposals to enhance the work of the department and school. These proposals must match the school's priorities for improvement. If the bid is successful, staff are then supported with their planning and implementation of any initiatives with additional non-contact time.

Governance

41. The governance of the school is very good. The governing body plays a significant role in developing the strategic direction of the school through its involvement in designing the improvement plan. The governing body and its committees are kept informed by the headteacher and the senior managers. The governors are clear about the strengths of the school.

Aids and barriers to raising achievement

42. Compared to most secondary schools there are relatively few barriers to learning. A significant aid to raising achievement is the very positive attitudes of the students to their learning that is promoted by the staff. The school has many effective strategies in place to support learning and to raise students' achievement. Improved self-review clearly identifies the strengths and weaknesses in school. The school shows a commitment and determination to improve and has strong systems in place to make further improvements. The academic and pastoral support systems are very good. In particular, the school quickly identifies those students who may need support, and acts promptly where necessary. In addition, the academic support that students receive in school ensures that they have every opportunity to reach their potential. The curriculum is very wide, for example offering many languages, which allows students to follow their interests and extend their learning. The activities offered outside the school day, including those for the sixth form, are outstanding.

Sixth form

Key staff with responsibilities in the sixth form provide **very good** leadership. The effectiveness of the management of the sixth form is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Key staff who manage the sixth form are clear about future developments.
- A rich curriculum provides students with an excellent range of subjects and experiences.
- The very good relationships make students feel well supported and fully involved in the life of the school.
- The new head of the sixth form has a clear vision for raising standards and has made important innovations.
- The programme of careers advice to guide students in the next stage of their careers is not sufficiently developed or co-ordinated.

Commentary

43. Senior staff who are involved in managing the sixth form have a clear vision for future development. This has led to a significant rise in standards in recent years. Students achieve very well, helped by the effective system for monitoring their academic progress by subject teachers and tutors.
44. The academic needs and aspirations of students are met very well through the rich, well-planned curriculum and many opportunities for full involvement in the life of the school. They are proud to belong to the school and willingly embrace its values of hard work, academic success and personal responsibility. The very high proportion of Year 11 students who stay on at the school is a measure of the regard the sixth form is held and of its very effective management.
45. Additional initiatives for supporting students' academic work and university applications have been introduced by the recently appointed and committed head of sixth form. The school is aware that planned careers advice is undeveloped.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	3,789,822
Total expenditure	3,784,983
Expenditure per student	2,817

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	166,088
Balance carried forward to the next	134,434

Value for Money

46. Taking into account:

- the high standards and very good achievement of students throughout the school,
- the very good behaviour and attitudes of students in all years,
- the overall very good quality of leadership and management,
- the overall very good teaching and learning,
- the breadth of the curriculum and excellent range of extra-curriculum opportunities,

the school gives very good value for money overall and the sixth form is cost effective.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

The Language school and European and community languages

The school's specialist language status has had an outstanding impact in establishing very high standards in foreign languages and information and communication technology. An international culture is being promoted throughout the school and there is excellent support for links with the local community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The language college benefits from excellent leadership resulting in fast progress towards its key targets.
- Standards in modern languages have improved rapidly and are now well above average.
- Teachers and students have excellent information and communication technology skills and make optimum use of the resources.
- The curriculum provides a very wide choice and variety of languages throughout the school.
- There is very good support for local primary schools, adult education and parents in language learning.
- The schools' learning resource centre does not make adequate provision for students to develop as independent learners in their language studies.

Commentary

47. Leadership and management of the specialist language college provision are excellent. Clarity of vision and skilled prioritisation has resulted in rapid progress in meeting key targets. Standards in modern languages are now very high. This results from a range of initiatives particularly the outstanding developments in the use of language laboratories and information and communication technology. Well-planned and systematic staff training has led to the regular use of information and communication technology in lessons. This competent and effective use is a key factor in motivating students to learn at least two, and sometimes three, languages between the ages of 11 and 16 years. There is also an excellent languages programme in the sixth form. In Year 13 all students choose a language from a particularly well-planned programme. The teaching observed in Spanish is outstanding and good or very good in German, Chinese and Japanese.
48. Students in partner primary schools benefit from very good links with the school through enhanced language facilities and resources. Lessons prepare primary school students very well for their secondary school education in modern languages. Language and literacy summer schools and language classes for parents and staff are highly appreciated and provided at no cost.
49. The school's curriculum is significantly enriched by a wide range of educational visits, pen-friend links and email contacts. These help students understand the relevance of language learning and make an important contribution to the recently awarded international school status. The school has accurately identified the need to develop this international ethos further by including more curriculum areas in its activities. The school is aware that its language resources centre does not yet provide a sufficiently good range of materials for students to borrow for their own use.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4.

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

The overall quality of provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Year 9 national tests and at GCSE are very high.
- Some of the most able students under-achieve.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Improvement since the previous inspection is very good because of very effective leadership.
- The department does not use assessment information well enough in its lesson planning.
- Students' positive attitudes to the subject contribute considerably to their very good achievement.

Commentary

50. Standards in Year 9 national tests in 2002 were very high, as they were in the three previous years. The difference between the performance of boys and girls is less than it is nationally. However, fewer students than expected gain the highest level, given their prior attainment. Standards at GCSE are also very high. In English literature they exceed those attained in most grammar schools, but in English language students do not perform as well as they do in many other subjects. Students with special educational needs make the same rate of progress as other students.
51. The standards of work seen are very high, particularly in speaking and listening. Most students in all years talk confidently about a wide range of topical issues as well as the texts they are studying. They clearly explain and justify their opinions but are also prepared to modify them as a result of group or class discussions. Reading skills are also well developed. There are many opportunities for students to practise their deductive skills in lessons, and by the end of Year 11, their critical awareness of the power of language to move and persuade is impressive. In Year 9, students read and enjoy challenging texts such as *Lord of the Flies* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*, which are normally studied for GCSE at other schools. Narrative writing is well above average. It is lively and often original and shows the flair and creativity of students who are able to use figurative language very effectively to enrich their descriptions. The weaknesses in some writing is in the structuring of discursive and expository forms and some students' unfamiliarity with formal constructions and vocabulary.
52. Students achieve very well overall, although some of the most able do not attain the top grades in GCSE English language. Students with special educational needs are well supported in lessons by their teachers and fellow students. Achievement is also aided by students' very positive attitudes, the motivation provided by their teachers and a very good curriculum, which includes regular library and drama lessons in Years 7 to 9 and a suitable range of information and communication technology activities. All students study both language and literature at GCSE and there is also a drama option. Additionally, regular theatre trips, visiting writers and book fairs, as well as poetry, writing, public speaking and debating competitions, provide considerable enrichment.
53. Teaching and learning are very good overall because of the teachers' very good subject knowledge, their high expectations of students' behaviour and work, and the wide range of teaching methods used. Much of the teaching is lively and stimulating and encourages

students to make their own decisions, to be inquisitive and independent. However, teachers do not make effective use of national test level and GCSE grade descriptors, or assessment information, when planning their lessons. This means that the most able students are not always fully challenged. The department is now paying much greater attention to targeting the skills that are to be developed in lessons, and this is helping all students to improve their writing.

54. The leadership and management of this large and enthusiastic department are very good. The whole team works hard to improve standards, particularly those of the most able. There are several strategies in place, which are carefully evaluated and regularly revised. Responsibilities are suitably delegated, teaching and marking are well monitored and priorities clearly identified. There is commitment and vision in the department and a shared love of the subject, from the newest to the longest serving teacher. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Standards in Year 9 tests and at GCSE are now very high, teaching and learning are very good, there is clear planning for progression in Years 7 to 9, a marking policy is in place and the achievement of boys is no longer a concern.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

55. Standards of literacy across the curriculum are very high. Speaking and listening skills are particularly strong because their mature attitudes and behaviour mean that students are given frequent opportunities in lessons to work together to use talk to solve problems, to evaluate to make decisions and to share, develop and refine their ideas. Reading comprehension is also of a very high standard because teachers stress the importance of deductive skills. Reading for pleasure is well promoted by the English department and library. Students' writing is also well above average. There is a good whole school marking policy and teachers ensure that work is technically accurate and well constructed. Note taking is well taught and students are often encouraged to respond creatively, through stories, letters or diaries.
56. The overall management of literacy is very good: however, not all heads of subjects monitor its quality and consistency rigorously. Some departments, such as art, history, drama and geography make a significant contribution, but the management of literacy is not yet fully embedded in the work of others, such as music, science and mathematics.

Modern foreign languages

The focus of the inspection was on French and Spanish.

The overall quality of provision in modern languages is **very good**.

French and Spanish

The overall quality of provision in French and Spanish is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' work and achievement are a very high standard.
- Teaching is very good. The foreign language is used extensively in class.
- There is very good leadership and management of a successful department.
- Teachers and students use information and communication technology (ICT) and language laboratory resources extremely effectively.
- The quality of teaching and learning in Spanish is outstanding.
- Excellent improvements have been made since the last inspection.
- The pace is slow and expectations are too low in some French lessons

Commentary

57. There has been an excellent improvement in standards in all modern languages in the last two years. Students' attainment in all language skills is now well above the national average. This is true for students taking national tests at the end of Year 9 and for those taking GCSE. In 2002, for example, all students who entered achieved a good pass grade in either French or German. The unconfirmed grades for 2003 show that far greater numbers of students are now attaining the higher A* or A grades. This rapid improvement is a result of the impact of specialist language status. Much credit must also be given to the head of department and the strong committed languages teaching team. Throughout the school students achieve very well.
58. All students, both boys and girls and those of different abilities achieve very well in both French and Spanish. By the end of Year 9, students have developed very good listening skills. They confidently use different tenses to describe past or future events. At the beginning of Year 9 higher attaining students write to pen-friends accurately describing past visits to Paris. This is due to very good teaching that uses a wide range of activities and resources. The excellent and regular use of ICT and language laboratory work motivates students. Systematic planning and training have given teachers confidence in using computers regularly.
59. Outstanding work was observed in Spanish. Lessons start quickly and are conducted entirely in rapid Spanish. Students rise to the challenge, enjoy the wide range of activity and concentrate fully throughout their lessons. After only a short time of learning this language, their achievement is so good they can write accurate descriptions of their homes and families and speak short dialogues confidently.
60. Many of these characteristics of language provision are also seen in Years 10 and 11. In French, for example, a lesson teaching vocabulary involved a wide range of imaginative activities such as card games and group work. This turned a routine activity into an enjoyable one. In a few French lessons, however, the pace is too slow. Higher expectations and more challenging activities are needed to involve all students and make sure they work to their full potential.
61. The leadership and management of the languages curriculum are very good. The head of department has made an excellent contribution to the detailed implementation of the language college priorities. There is a very clear understanding of what constitutes very good teaching. A particularly strong feature is the programme of observation, training and the development which is provided. This has resulted in effective team working and consistent approaches to teaching and assessment.

MATHEMATICS

The overall quality of provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management of the department are very good overall, and some aspects are excellent.
- The students' achievement is very good, and standards are very high throughout the school, but there are some small numbers of students who are underachieving.
- The teaching overall is very good, and at times excellent.
- The students have a very good attitude to their work and this supports their learning.
- In some lessons there is insufficient attention given to the problem-solving nature of mathematics and the needs of the most able students.

Commentary

62. Standards in mathematics are very high in all years. In the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2002, most of the students attained at least one level higher than the expected level 5, and 85 per cent were two levels higher. In 2003 the results were better. In the GCSE examinations in 2002, over 60 per cent of the students gained the highest grades, and this increased to 70 per cent in 2003, indicating the very good improvements being made by the department.
63. The overall achievement of the students from their entry into the school up to Year 11 is very good, although there are some small numbers of students who are underachieving. This includes the higher attaining students in some teaching groups who are not being challenged sufficiently, and some of the lower attaining students, whose misconceptions are not recognised and corrected quickly enough. Achievement is very good because of the overall quality of the teaching, and the very good attitude to learning on the part of the students. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers, due to their inclusion in suitable sets, slightly smaller classes, and additional personal support from their teachers, as well as the support, as available, from learning support assistants.
64. The quality of teaching overall is very good. A key feature is the way the teachers use strategies to ensure that students are fully involved in the lesson, and make progress together. Most of the teachers are extremely skilled at this, so that the work is pitched at a level which challenges the students well, and quickly identifies and resolves any difficulties which some students are experiencing. As a result, the students make considerable progress during the course of a lesson, and in some lessons seen in this inspection, the rate of learning was very impressive. All the teachers are very good mathematicians, and in lessons the presentation of content is precise and accurate so that the students have a clear model to follow. The teachers provide very good support to individual students. In the best lessons, the students are challenged to think and to solve problems, but in some lessons mathematics is presented as a set of processes to answer standard questions, and there is not enough challenge or pace.
65. Learning is very good because the students take care and pride in the presentation of their work. They work accurately, and their exercise books form a useful source for reference and revision, although their understanding might deepen if they were given more opportunities to develop their own ways of solving problems, taking notes and storing information. Most of the students work hard during the lesson, support each other well, and maintain a high level of concentration on the task in hand.
66. Students cover all areas of the curriculum at a suitable level. Standards of numeracy are good overall, but lag behind the overall standards of mathematics, because of a lack of mental flexibility, which sometimes inhibits progress. Information and communication technology is well used by some of the teachers to enhance the quality of presentations, but not yet sufficiently used to enhance learning by all teachers. Assessment of the progress of individual students is very good. The department is very well organised, and the leadership of the head of department is very good, with some excellent features, particularly the creation of a coherent team and the effective adoption of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy². However, schemes of work and planning do not take sufficient account to develop more problem-solving activities as a part of teaching and learning, and ways of providing greater challenge for the higher attaining students in all sets. The department is well resourced. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. The quality of the teaching has improved, the students are achieving more, and their attitudes and behaviour are more positive.

² The Key Stage 3 National Strategy aims to raise standards by strengthening teaching and learning in all secondary schools for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. This National Strategy now affects all subjects.

Mathematics across the curriculum

67. Standards of numeracy are very high, and the application of mathematics skills supports access to the curriculum in many subject areas. The school encourages teachers across the curriculum to look for opportunities to ensure that numeracy standards are constantly improved, and there is an active group of teachers who meet regularly to review progress. It has yet to decide how it will monitor and evaluate improvements in the students' numeracy in all areas of the curriculum. However, in this inspection visit, some good examples were seen of teachers in design and technology, and in geography, not only using mathematics well as part of teaching and learning in their subject, but also ensuring that the students' mathematical skills in these areas were developed. In general, the students' numerical and mathematical abilities support learning well across the curriculum. Good examples of the use of statistical data, and algebraic handling of equations are found in science, and the personal, social and health education course involves interpretation of charts and data.

SCIENCE

The overall quality of provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management of the department are very good and improving, which has created a positive team ethos.
- Students have very positive attitudes which contribute significantly to their high attainment, very good achievement and quality of learning.
- Although teaching is good overall, some teachers lack the skill and strategies to ensure the most effective learning and so not all students are suitably challenged.
- Relationships between staff and students are very good and support learning.
- There is inconsistent assessment of students' work to promote individual learning and ensure that students reach their full potential.
- Technicians provide outstanding support for teaching and learning.

Commentary

68. By the end of Year 9, attainment in the national tests is very high, but the proportion of students attaining the higher levels is below that for similar schools. However, the attainment of these students in science on entry to the school was relatively lower than other similar schools, so their achievement by the end of Year 9 is very good. At GCSE, results are very high compared to national standards and the proportion of students attaining the highest grades is above that of similar schools, indicating very good achievement by the end of Year 11. There have been good improvements since the last inspection. There is no significant difference between the achievement of boys and girls or students with special educational needs.
69. Overall, teaching is good. A high proportion of the teaching is very good, but there is also unsatisfactory teaching in the department, which is recognised by the school and parents. Teachers are knowledgeable, authoritative and most lessons are well-planned and structured to stimulate students' interest and enthusiasm. Students show high levels of concentration and application. Very good learning is ensured by the students' very positive attitudes and encouraged by energetic and enthusiastic teaching. Most lessons are conducted at a rapid pace. Frequent questioning challenges students and assesses their learning. There is regular, ambitious practical work, facilitated by an outstanding team of technicians. Very good and mutually respectful relationships between teachers and students lead to very good behaviour and enjoyable learning. However, in some lessons teaching and consequent learning are unsatisfactory due to an inadequate range of teaching strategies, leading to inadequate pace, stimulation and challenge.

70. Assessment of written work is inconsistent throughout the department and does not give adequate guidance and support as to how the students' learning can be enhanced. After-school lessons provide good support to boost the achievement of the lowest attaining students. From Year 9, students are divided into 'higher' or 'standard' sets to provide two levels of pace of learning. This system on its own does not provide sufficient matching of work to students' needs and consequently expectations and challenge for all students are not always sufficiently high.
71. Although the three science subject areas are separated in different parts of the school, the accommodation and resources of the department are good. Information and communication technology resources are good and developing. Their use in demonstrations and practical work is increasing rapidly, aided by the invaluable expertise and support of the team of technicians.
72. The head of science has very good ideas and the enthusiasm to develop the department and the achievement of its students. Her very good leadership and management has already successfully merged the three subject areas so that they are now working well together. Departmental review and monitoring arrangements of teaching and learning are still under-developed. Consequently, the very good teaching and learning within the department is not shared to support less experienced or less effective colleagues. The analysis of test and examination results is thorough and is used to influence departmental planning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

The overall quality of provision in information and communication technology is currently **very good**, but has been poor for the previous three years.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results over the last three years have been unsatisfactory due to the previous poor leadership and management.
- The current very good management of the department ensures exemplary lesson planning.
- Teaching is much improved and now very good; leading to students producing work of a very high standard.
- The take-up among girls to examination courses is very low.
- Well-resourced ICT rooms and a robust network.
- Several departments have inadequate access to ICT provision.

Commentary

73. GCSE results during the last three years have been well below the standards achieved by other subjects in school. For example, the A*-C pass rate in 2003 was 59 per cent compared to the school average in the high nineties. In the same year, only 26 per cent of passes were the higher A/B grades, a very much lower proportion than in other subjects. Results have been poor because of ineffective leadership and management and students not being taught work that accurately matched the requirements of the examination syllabus. Achievement has been unsatisfactory, but the situation is now much improved and students now make very good progress in lessons.
74. A new head of department has been appointed and is ensuring that the current work in folders, exercise books and electronic records is correctly matched to syllabus requirements and reflects the ability of the students. There is now a coherent scheme of work and students are presented with imaginative scenarios and real-life exercises.
75. After a period of partly ineffective teaching the quality is now very good and students respond keenly, obviously taking great delight in their learning, emerging ICT skills and in

the challenges presented by imaginatively designed programmes. Strong teacher commitment offers lunchtime and afternoon clubs and drop-in sessions and there are outstanding displays of students' work in the well-resourced ICT rooms.

76. The combination of strong new departmental appointments and strategic oversight by a member of senior management has created a dynamic team with a strong impact on both learning and organisation. Schemes of work have been rewritten; much of the planning of individual lessons is exemplary with clear learning and assessment activities, both for able students and for the gifted and talented. Marking and feedback are formative and constructive. Links with other schools in the borough are exploited to ensure secure moderation of work and conformity to examination board criteria.
77. The network is reliable and well managed, while the network management team contribute strongly to training, support for teachers and the ongoing development of on-line and intranet provision. The department's development plan includes strategies to develop new vocational programmes and strategies to address the current imbalance of boys and girls in the subject.
78. There has been substantial investment in ICT resources and training since the last inspection, with the creation of four excellent and flexible ICT rooms, provision of interactive whiteboards and data projectors in a number of areas, bookable sets of laptop computers, colour printers and digital cameras. Inevitably there is more to be done, but there is a solid resource on which to build. The school acknowledges the decline in GCSE attainment, and has taken robust measures to address this. Given the quality of work observed in the current Year 11 there is evidence of substantial impact. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

Information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum

79. The overall standards of ICT across the curriculum are very high. Several departments, for example, science, music and physical education make imaginative use of information and communication technology in presentation of documents, research, sounds, data, creation of images and analysis of performance. The use of ICT in modern languages is outstanding and a 'state of the art' digital language laboratory is creatively and effectively used. Good quality technical support is another key factor in the successful use and development of ICT across the curriculum. However, there is scope for additional provision of hardware within departments and individual classrooms. Many subjects, such as Latin, economics and business studies do not have sufficient opportunity to use computers in class. Learning resources and support for students are not yet available on a school intranet.

HUMANITIES

The inspection focus was on religious education and classical civilization, including Latin. The work in history and geography was sampled.

Provision in history in Years 7 to 11 is **very good**. GCSE results in the last two years have been well above average, especially at the highest grades. In the lessons sampled, standards are well above average and all students achieve well as the result of very good teaching.

The overall provision in geography is **very good**. GCSE results in 2002 were very high compared to national averages. Geography is one of the best performing subjects in the school. Standards are well above average at the end of Year 9 and very high at the end of Year 11. Students achieve very well and there are no significant differences in achievement between boys and girls or across the different levels of ability in the school. Teaching is very good. The curriculum is good and is well supported by extensive use of trips and field courses. Leadership and management of the subject are very good and issues raised at the previous inspection have been successfully addressed. The subject has made very good progress since that time.

Religious education

The overall quality of provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The effective leadership of the head of department who has a clear vision of how to take the subject forward and is developing strategies to achieve these challenging goals.
- The improving status of the subject and results of the GCSE course now established in Years 10 and 11 for all students.
- The assessment system, based on agreed criteria, is not implemented consistently to inform planning and raise standards.
- Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning between classes in Years 7 to 9 do not ensure students achieve sufficiently well.
- A stimulating working environment created with high quality displays in classrooms and a commitment to celebrating students' work.

Commentary

80. The provision of religious education has recently improved. New courses that fully meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education have been established throughout the school. Standards are in line with the expectations of this syllabus in Years 7 to 9 and higher than the national average in Years 10 and 11, although fewer students than would be expected achieve the highest GCSE grades, as the most able students are not adequately challenged to achieve their best. Although achievement is satisfactory overall, it should be higher by the end of Year 9.
81. Overall, teaching is satisfactory. There are wide variations between classes in Years 7 to 9, but teaching in Years 10 and 11 is stronger. Teachers have good subject knowledge and plan well structured lessons, the aims of which are clear to students. Where teaching is good, students' interest is sustained through the use of varied activities and carefully chosen resources and they achieve well. However, some lessons lack pace and challenge and students' progress is unsatisfactory. The agreed criteria for assessment is not used consistently. This means that activities in lessons are not always well matched to the ability of students and they receive inadequate feedback on what they have done well and how their work might be improved.
82. The relatively new head of department is providing good leadership and management and is aware of the weaknesses. She has begun to implement a system designed to improve the current situation. A stimulating working environment has been created with high quality displays in classrooms and a commitment to celebrating students' work. Overall, there have been good improvements since the last inspection.

Classical civilisation

The overall provision in classical civilisation is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement is good and GCSE examinations results are well above average.
- The department is very effectively led and managed.
- Teaching overall is very good and promotes very positive attitudes in students.
- Monitoring teaching in Years 7 to 9 is under-developed and leads to some inconsistency in achievement between classes

Commentary

83. Students' achievement in Latin is very good overall, and GCSE examinations results are well above average. Over the last three years all entrants have gained a good grade in examinations. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good, but less secure than Years 10 and 11 because teaching in a few classes insufficiently challenges the more able students and the Latin language is proving too difficult for less linguistically able students in the lower sets. Students' accuracy in translation is a positive feature of their knowledge, together with the quality of their written work in English, which sometimes possesses elegance and flair. Many students progress beyond a basic understanding of the Latin text, to thoughtful consideration of how authors use Latin to convey emotion, and how life and customs are very different today. Students' attitudes and behaviour, with a few exceptions in some Year 7 to 9 classes, are very good, leading to very good progress overall. There is a well-planned balance between a study of the language itself and consideration of Roman civilisation.
84. There are examples of highly effective teaching in all years, but teaching in the GCSE groups is stronger than in Years 7 to 9. As a result, there is greater consistency in students' achievement. Students' progress is promoted by the teachers' knowledge of the subject, their enthusiasm, and their ability to ensure learning by very good planning and marking. Good use of humour successfully engages students and motivates them to work hard. In a Year 7 lesson the idea that school dinners might include peacock and roast dormice, as a Roman meal might have done, evoked peals of laughter.
85. The department is very well led. As a result, there is a shared commitment to giving students access to the enriching experience of studying the classical world. A particularly good example of this is the new, weekly after-school classical Greek lesson. This mixed-age class is regularly attended on a voluntary basis by 23 students, from Years 7 to 13. Very good teaching and the excellent attitudes of the students make this lesson a richly rewarding lesson for all participants and have already led to very high standards of achievement for even the youngest students.
86. Management of the department is good overall, except for monitoring of teaching in Years 7 to 9. As a result, there is inconsistency in achievement between some classes. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

TECHNOLOGY

The overall quality of provision in design and technology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Recent changes to the leadership and management now ensure a much clearer direction to the subject, but schemes of work are out of date.
 - Very good teaching, learning and positive relationships motivates the students to succeed and achieve high standards.
 - Computers are not made readily available to students in lessons.
 - Visits, extra-curricular and extension activities are not provided to further students' knowledge and interest, or to extend the gifted and talented.
87. The recently appointed head of department has worked very hard to create a team of teachers who now share responsibility collectively. The improvements that have to be made to move the department forward have already been identified and planned. When students arrive in school, many have had an incomplete experience of design and technology, and they make rapid progress in the acquisition of skills, and in understanding of the design process. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are well above average, but teacher assessments made at the end of Year 9 show that the rapid rise in attainment slows down in Year 9, in part owing to the effect of the time-tabling of some single practical lessons.

The standards in the Year 11 GCSE graphics have improved, due to focused individual assessments and one-to-one tutorials. The standards in Year 11 textiles are exceptionally high, due to the encouragement by the teacher for students to develop individuality and creativity. Pupils achieve high standards of work, but there are few visits and extra-curricular activities to extend learning and challenge the most talented students. Teachers do not readily make computers accessible in some lessons and this slows down the progress that students can make.

88. Teaching and learning are very good, and inspire students to succeed and achieve high standards. Demonstrations by teachers are often excellent, with new skills thoroughly taught and reinforced. Particular attention is given to ensuring homework enhances students' overall achievement. Assessment procedures have only recently been introduced for students in Years 7 to 9, but already students know their level of attainment and how they can improve. There has been very good improvement since the time of the last inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and music were the focus of the inspection, but the work in drama was also sampled.

Drama

The overall quality of provision for drama is **very good**. Very good teaching leads to students achieving high standards. Drama is a very recent introduction to the school's curriculum for students in Years 10 and 11. In a short time the subject has made outstanding progress, because of high quality of teaching and the dedicated drive and commitment of the teacher in charge. Students embark upon this subject with little prior experience from Years 7 to 9. Extremely well planned lessons delivered by teachers with excellent subject knowledge lead to students not only thoroughly enjoying the subject, but developing their skills to a high standard very quickly.

Art

Overall the quality of provision in art is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good with some excellent features.
- Teachers have very high expectations of pupils who achieve very high standards.
- The head of department provides very good leadership.
- Assessment and recording systems are very good overall, but insufficient use is made of assessment information to inform target setting to track individual students' progress.
- Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) within the department.

89. Students' attainment on entry to Year 7 is in line with national expectations. By the end of Year 9 their attainment is well above the national average and achievement is very good. In the 2002 GCSE examination the number of pupils achieving the highest grades was well above the national figure. Girls' attainment is higher than boys', mostly because girls work with greater concentration and more focus than boys. In the 2003 examination there was improvement in the number of students achieving the highest grades. Achievement from the end of Year 9 to the end of Year 11 is also very good.

90. Students in Year 7 settle readily to the tasks and work well to acquire new skills. By the time they reach Year 9, they have acquired the capacity for working independently very well. The majority make good use of their visual diaries as a means of carrying out research and developing ideas. The standard of work is well above national expectations

and achievement is very good. Year 10 students are enthusiastic about drawing and painting and quickly settle in class. The objects that Year 11 pupils produce show increasing self-confidence. They are now prepared to rely more heavily on their own attitudes and beliefs as starting points for exploration. The gifted and talented pupils produce very good evaluative pieces in their visual diaries.

91. Teaching is very good with some excellent features. Lesson introductions are very good and teachers possess very good subject knowledge. Planning is carried out thoroughly and very good use is made of exemplar material. Consequently, objectives are clearly set and students know what they must do during each lesson. They are challenged to produce drawings, paintings and craft-work of a very high standard.
92. The head of department provides very good leadership and sets a very good role model for staff. Management is very good and there are very good assessment systems in place. Students are given oral and written feedback on a regular basis and are kept well informed about their progress, but insufficient use is made of assessment information to inform target setting for individual pupils.
93. Accommodation is very good overall. However, storage remains an issue for students' work and also for equipment and resources. The use of technology, including photography and ICT, computers, scanners, digital cameras and printers remains underdeveloped in the art and design area. Improvement since the last inspection is very good as there has been significant improvement in the provision of the art studio accommodation and most of the issues raised have been resolved.

Music

The overall quality of provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Consistently good teaching and learning ensure high standards of work and students achieve particularly well in Years 10 and 11.
- Despite a modest time allocation to the subject in Years 7 to 9, the very good breadth of the curriculum, provides a wide variety of musical opportunity for students.
- Very good leadership has developed the subject, particularly in Years 10 and 11 and in the extra-curricular opportunities throughout the school.
- The provision for learning to play musical instruments in school is underdeveloped.

Commentary

94. Standards in Years 7 to 9 are above average and in Years 10 and 11 they are well above average. Students achieve well overall, making very good progress in Years 10 and 11 because of effective teaching and the very positive attitudes of the students. Teaching is consistently good and frequently better and this motivates the students to work hard in lessons. Staff have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject, and are particularly skilled in using sophisticated computer software to meet students' creative needs. They manage students very well and this leads to very good relations with the students. Students work very well collaboratively, able to share ideas well, as in the Year 9 group work developing Latin percussion rhythms. However, when using keyboards and computers, students often have to wait too long for technical assistance, which significantly restricts the progress made. Opportunities to develop students' ability to express themselves, using correct technical terminology and language, lacks rigour and adequate planning.
95. The head of department has a clear rationale for developing the subject and has implemented policies, which have improved provision in Years 10 and 11 and encouraged growth and good performance in the sixth form. There is less rigour in Years 7 to 9, where

many initiatives, such as supporting the gifted and talented, assessing against National Curriculum criteria, developing key vocabulary and contributing to language college initiatives are in their infancy and are not yet firmly embedded in the work of the department. Musical collaborations with drama in recent years have been of a very high standard. The present decision to concentrate on regular rehearsal and development of the orchestra and other ensembles is prudent, especially in the light of the small number of instrumental teachers employed by the school, who might normally supplement such provision. The department makes a very good contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students.

96. Despite a modest time allocation to the subject in Years 7 – to 9, the very good breadth of the curriculum, including substantial information and communication technology related projects, and the range of extra-curricular activities, provides a wide variety of musical opportunity for students. Information and communication technology as a tool for creativity and as a source of information is very well used, but the book stock in the library does not meet the needs of examinations students. Teaching space is cramped and this restricts the range of practical work possible. Since the last inspection the subject has made good improvement, with greater consistency in teaching and heightened interest and achievement of the older students.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION²

Overall, the quality of provision for the 'core programme' in physical education is **good**.

Overall, the quality of provision in GCSE physical education is **very good**.

The quality of provision in extra-curricular physical education is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in the core physical education programme are above average in all years and students achieve well because the teaching and department leadership is good.
- The range and number of extra-curricular activities are excellent.
- Very positive attitudes and very good relationships between staff and students ensure high levels of participation.
- There are not enough planned opportunities in the schemes of work and lessons for students to plan and evaluate their work.
- Assessment procedures are satisfactory, but do not test students' attainment on entry or analyse the achievement of groups of students.
- Accommodation is very good and has a positive impact on students' learning.

Commentary

97. Students' standards of attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 are in line with national expectations. Students have inconsistent experiences before joining the school, and on arrival have average standards in games activities and below average in movement skills. By the end of Year 9, students attain above average standards in most activities and therefore, their achievement is good. Boys and girls build a secure knowledge of fitness and are able to warm up independently and effectively. Students in Years 10 and 11 attain above average standards because they continue to improve their games and athletic skills in their core national curriculum lessons. Students' analytical and planning skills are not as well developed as their performance skills, because there is insufficient emphasis in promoting these strands of the National Curriculum in lessons. These two aspects of the national curriculum programme are not sufficiently planned and taught in lessons. Students in Year 10 studying the recently introduced GCSE option course attain standards that are well above national averages. These high standards are the result of the students' very

² All students are required to follow the national curriculum programme for physical education, often referred to as the 'core programme'. The emphasis of the inspection report on physical education is to evaluate the provision for this compulsory aspect of physical education. In addition, students may opt to follow a GCSE examination course in Years 10 and 11. Another feature of physical education provision is the range and quality of extra-curricular activities

positive attitudes and teachers' constructive marking, which informs students clearly how to improve their work. As part of the voluntary extra-curricular programme, individual students and teams achieve very high standards in district and county competitions in athletics, cricket, swimming, rugby, football, netball, hockey and basketball. The standards of these talented students are well above average and they benefit from the excellent opportunities provided by their teachers.

98. The overall good achievement of students in the core physical education programme is directly attributable to good teaching and to the students' very positive attitudes and relationships with their teachers. Students benefit in their learning because many groups are divided by ability. This is a positive strategy that promotes the learning of all students. In lessons where learning is very good, students' time on activity is high, literacy and numeracy skills are developed well and tasks are matched to the ability and needs of individuals. In a few lessons higher ability students were not given more difficult tasks to extend them physically. Teachers have very good subject expertise and give students a good visual image on which to base their performance. However, students are not consistently given opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning or to evaluate their own and others' work and this limits their confidence and progress in these aspects. One reason for the lack of variety of the tasks set is the short time for practical activity in the 50 minute lesson.
99. Students also achieve well as the result of good leadership and management by the relatively new head of department. She has a clear vision of where the department is going and a strong desire to raise the profile of the department and make improvements. Currently, the schemes of work in Years 7 to 9 are too weighted towards teaching the games element of the national curriculum and a better balance needs to be assured. In addition, there are insufficient links between assessment arrangements and curriculum planning to ensure students' achievements is enhanced further. However, very good improvements have been made since the previous inspection. The Sportsmark award, for extra-curricular activities, has been gained and the very good accommodation has helped students to attain good standards in a wide range of activities.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

The school does not offer any vocational courses.

Economics and business studies

The work in business studies and economics was sampled in Years 10 and 11 and the overall quality of provision is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good standards in GCSE economics in 2002 and 2003.
- Excellent improvement in standards since the last inspection.
- Very good teaching and learning ensures that student achievement is very good.
- Very good leadership and management by the head of department.
- Insufficient use of information and communication technology.
- The strategies for supporting the identified gifted and talented students are under-developed.

Commentary

100. The high standards of written work, students' understanding and their attainment in examinations are significantly above national standards. This success is achieved as a result of well-qualified, enthusiastic teachers who plan their lessons well. Very good learning is enhanced by the positive approach of the students who make and sustain gains

in their knowledge and understanding. Overall, students' achieve very well. Currently, there is insufficient use made of information and communication technology. The planning for the several very talented students is under-developed and not all reach their full potential.

101. Very strong and effective leadership of the subject has resulted in an excellent improvement in overall provision and the introduction of a very popular new business studies and economics GCSE course in Year 10.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Overall, the quality of provision in personal, social and health education and citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and students achieve well.
- Teaching is very good where citizenship is taught as part of the personal, social, health and citizenship education programme.
- Overall, across the range of subjects in school, the teaching of citizenship is satisfactory.
- There are inconsistencies in provision across the curriculum.
- A good start has been made to develop assessment procedures.

Commentary

102. Standards in citizenship are above average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Boys and girls, and students from minority ethnic backgrounds achieve equally well. The provision for personal, social and health education is good. Most students are taught for one period a week. This is also seen as an integral part of a number of subjects. Students in Year 10 have full days allocated at various times of the year and this arrangement works well. There is a good link with careers advice and preparation for work experience. Visitors to the school teach aspects of sex education and drugs awareness in these lessons.
103. Teaching is very good where citizenship is taught as part of personal, social, health and citizenship education lessons. Teachers plan lessons carefully to ensure that students are actively involved in lessons and aspects of citizenship, such as showing responsibility for themselves and others are dealt with well. Students show interest in lessons and have very good attitudes to work. They work well in pairs and groups and show sensitivity to the thoughts and views of others. Where aspects of citizenship are taught through other subjects the picture is less consistent and teaching is satisfactory rather than good. There is very good practice in subjects such as art, history and geography for example, but it is less well planned and delivered in many other subjects.
104. The school has carried out a detailed audit of where citizenship can be taught across the curriculum. Another is now planned to ensure greater consistency and coverage. Overall the citizenship curriculum is good. Assessment procedures are being developed to ensure that all aspects of the subject are covered. Students and staff participate in a wide range of charity and community based activities demonstrating their commitment to the local and national community. The leadership and management of the subject are good. A very good programme of activities is now developing and the managers of the subject have a clear view of how to develop it further in the future.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 11 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 2002

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
BIOLOGY	6	100		33.33		3.167	
BUSINESS STUDIES	26	100		19.23		2.923	
CHEMISTRY	1	100				2	
CLASSICAL CIVILISATION	13	100		76.92		4.077	
ECONOMICS	1	100		0		2	
ENGLISH LANGUAGE	19	100		31.58		3.316	
ENGLISH LITERATURE	2	100		0		2	
FRENCH	12	100		58.33		3.75	
FURTHER MATHEMATICS	1	100		100		4	
GENERAL STUDIES	5	100		0		1.2	
GEOGRAPHY	4	100		0		2	
HISTORY	7	100		14.29		1.714	
IT	16	93.75		43.75		3.25	
MATHS	1	100		0		1	
MUSIC TECHNOLOGY	1	100		100		4	
PHYSICS	1	100		0		3	
SOCIOLOGY	15	86.67		33.33		2.667	

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	24	100	95.1	66.67	50.2	7.75	
BIOLOGY	21	100	92.1	28.57	41.2	5.619	
CHEMISTRY	17	100	94.7	76.47	51.2	7.647	
COMPUTER STUDIES	23	100	89.1	47.83	23.6	6.783	
ECONOMICS	14	100	96.2	64.29	49.4	7.571	
ENGLISH	38	100	98.1	50	43.2	6.789	
FRENCH	12	100	96.9	83.33	54.5	8.33	
GENERAL STUDIES	103	96.12	88.8	29.13	28.2	5.204	

GEOGRAPHY	19	100	97.5	68.42	46.2	7.789	
GERMAN	3	100	97.1	100	52.8	9.33	
GOVERNMENT & POLITICS	8	100	96.5	37.5	51.8	5.75	
HISTORY	30	100	96.8	40	45.8	5.933	
ITALIAN	1	100	94.4	100	70.2	8	
LATIN	3	100	98.5	66.67	59.2	8.667	
MATHS	45	100	90.5	62.22	56.1	7.91	
MUSIC	6	100	97.2	66.67	46.5	7.667	
PE	12	100	94.9	41.67	29.5	6.5	
PHYSICS	14	100	93.2	57.14	46.9	6.429	
TECHNOLOGY	2	100	95.1	100	35.1	8	
THEATRE STUDIES	10	100	97.7	40	42.2	7.2	

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The inspection focus was on English literature but AS English language, currently offered only in Year 12, was also sampled. One lesson of English language was seen. Standards are well above average and teaching and learning are very good. Students respond eagerly and confidently to a range of written and spoken texts. They use the subject's specialist language in their lessons and work and understand its concepts very well. Consequently, they also achieve very well.

English

The overall quality of provision in English literature is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are consistently very high.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and high expectations of their students; and ensure that learning is both challenging and enjoyable.
- Students show a strong commitment to the course, work very well, both collaboratively and independently, and their achievement is very good.
- Good leadership has ensured that improvement since the previous inspection is very good.
- The department has not yet fully incorporated citizenship into its lesson planning.

Commentary

105. Results for both male and female students in 2002 were well above national expectations. In the previous two years they were very high. Unconfirmed figures for 2003 indicate that they are once more at their pre-2002 levels.

106. Standards of work seen during the inspection, particularly in Year 13, are very high. The most able students write with controlled assurance. Their writing on *Hamlet*, Philip Larkin and the Metaphysical poets, for example, is particularly perceptive and sensitive and shows very good critical and analytical skills, as well as a close and thorough understanding of these texts. They are also very aware of the social and cultural influences upon the writers they study and how these influence their works. Coursework is thoroughly planned: students' writing and argument are mature and their interpretations are well justified. Personal responses to all three literary genres show that students are not afraid to have independent and controversial views.

107. Examination results, lesson observations and students' work completed during the course show that students' achievement is very good. Because of their own enthusiasm and maturity, and the very good teaching, their writing, research and oral skills mature rapidly in the sixth form. A good range of theatre visits, lectures and university links also enriches their learning. A further reason for their successful achievement is the excellent relationships which exist between students, and also with their teachers. As a consequence, they work very well, both independently and collaboratively, and they enjoy their lessons, particularly when researching topics which they have chosen themselves, engaging in dramatic approaches to texts or giving presentations.
108. Teaching and learning are very good overall and sometimes excellent. Assessment is of high quality and is used very effectively to show students what they need to do to improve and to set targets. All teachers have very good subject knowledge, high expectations of their students and plan well to make lessons relevant, challenging and enjoyable. This was well illustrated in a Year 13 lesson on *The Great Gatsby* in which students enthusiastically participated in role-plays and showed an impressive and mature depth of understanding and sensitivity to Scott Fitzgerald's writing. Students are inspired by their teachers and clearly share their love of literature.
109. The leadership of this dedicated team of teachers is very good. The head of department encourages and supports staff well, particularly in their professional development, and sets a good example of commitment and dedication. Management is also very good. The department regularly evaluates its own performance and shares best practice: it is constantly looking for ways to improve even further. Staff are currently considering how to build citizenship securely into its planning. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Standards are now very high, assessment is accurate and helpful to students and achievement is very good.

Modern Languages

The focus of the inspection was on French and German. Work in Spanish was also sampled. The quality of work in GCSE and general studies Spanish is outstanding. Teaching is excellent and as a result students make very rapid progress.

French

The overall quality of provision in French is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students attain very good standards in Year 12 because teachers have very good subject knowledge that they use well to promote learning.
- The extensive use of French in lessons sets high expectations and challenges students to achieve high standards.
- The use of informational and communication technology and internet websites provides high quality, up-to-date resources.
- French is increasing in its popularity with students because of very effective leadership.
- The pace of work is too slow in some lessons.

Commentary

110. In the last two years there have been big improvements in students' A-level examination results. This was particularly true in 2002 when results were well above average with most students obtaining either A or B grades. This reflects the general pattern of greatly improved standards in languages. A-level French is now chosen by far more students and is an increasingly popular and successful subject. This is attributable to a range of features that include the use of informational and communication technology, high quality teaching and the impact of additional resources and activities.

111. In Year 12 students achieve very well. They speak at good length with accurate pronunciation. They are confident in using more abstract language and concepts. Some higher attainers, for example, can competently compare the merits of different books and films. They are also well guided and supported by their teachers in making the transition from GCSE to A levels. This enables them to build effectively on their attainment at the end of Year 11.
112. In the smaller group of students taking French in Year 13 there is a much wider range of ability. Although higher attaining students have learnt to write accurately lower attainers continue to make basic errors in grammar and spelling.
113. Teaching and learning are very good. The use of computers and the language laboratory is regularly planned into lessons. This builds students' confidence in accessing and using websites that provide up-to-date information on topics such as the rights of young people in France. Most teachers speak excellent French and use it confidently throughout their lessons. Students therefore expect to have to listen very carefully in order to fully understand the content of their lessons and as a result develop good listening skills. Teachers also make sure that students have opportunities for note taking and carefully guide their research so that they become more confident in working independently. Teachers also have a very good knowledge and understanding of the set books they teach. They work extremely hard to prepare exercises and materials that help their students to achieve a good understanding of the plot and characters in these novels. In some lessons, however, the pace is slow and students require more help in understanding unfamiliar language.
114. The head of languages provides very effective co-ordination of the sixth form curriculum. A dedicated and hard working team of staff share the A-level teaching. They are largely responsible for the excellent improvements since the last inspection.

German

The overall quality of provision in German is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Student numbers have risen markedly in recent years and their achievement is currently very good.
- Excellent leadership and very good management ensure that teaching is very good.
- Students learn very well and are motivated to succeed.
- While very well equipped with computers to aid learning, reference dictionaries in the library do not have up-to-date spelling in the German language.

Commentary

115. Groups taking German in previous years have been too small to be able to comment reliably on their results compared to national averages. However, the recent language college status has given the subject impetus to expand, and current provision includes AS-level, A-level and a business German course as part of the general studies provision for Year 13. Standards of work observed were well above average and students' achievement is very good. Students in Year 13 express themselves in German in written prose with accurate grammar and a wide range of vocabulary. They respond with understanding and insight to literature, and are able to respond well orally on topics beyond those of immediate study. They have excellent attitudes, thirsting to learn and exploiting resources independently to further their learning. In Year 12 the attitudes of students is very good and standards of written and spoken German are already well beyond those expected at GCSE.

116. Teaching overall is very good. The flawless German of experienced staff, combined with a wealth of tried and tested strategies for giving students maximum exposure to the language in a systematic and stimulating way, ensures that students learn very well. Where younger staff may occasionally make minor errors of language and not have quite such a rigorous teaching technique, they still communicate huge passion for the subject. Information and communication technology is very well used, including well conceived research homework on topical themes which help students to learn at their own pace. Gifted linguists write extensively in free prose and are adequately challenged to achieve very high standards. Students report that regular sessions with the language assistant are very helpful. Assessment is very good, helping students to reflect on their achievements and to identify areas of specific help for individuals, which teachers freely give out of hours.
117. Leadership of the subject is excellent, resulting in very significant improvement since the last inspection. The language college co-ordinator is co-author of an A-level textbook and the benefits of her experience are very well harnessed through influence on the quality of teaching and the impact this has on in-house staff training. Retention of students on German courses is very good and students talk very positively of the support they receive academically and in preparing for higher education. The language college initiatives are not as advanced as in French, but plans to network with schools in Europe and the United Kingdom are underway, as are plans for work experience based in the European Union. Students use dictionaries very well, although the stock in the library needs updating to take account of recent reforms in the spelling of German.

MATHEMATICS

The overall quality of provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are very good and a large proportion of students opt for examination courses.
- The students' achievement is very good and standards are well above average.
- The overall quality of the teaching is very good, at times excellent and as a result the students work extremely hard and make very good progress.
- Challenging teaching, which encourages the understanding of key concepts and structures, is not sufficiently consistent in all lessons.

Commentary

118. Standards in mathematics in the A level course are well above average. In the national examinations in 2002, half the students obtained the top grade A, two thirds of them scored a grade A or B and all obtained a pass grade. These results were the best for many years. The girls' results in this year were particularly strong. The results in 2003 were not quite so good, with fewer students attaining A grade, although a similar proportion scored A or B.
119. The students' achievement is very good. In all classes they work hard. Many of them are developing a good self-critical approach, and seek a deeper understanding of what they are doing. A few are less confident, and too readily seek help, before putting in enough effort to reach some solution. Students work diligently, and the quality of their work and the accuracy support their achievement.
120. The quality of the teaching is very good overall, varying in different classes from good to excellent. All the teachers are very good mathematicians, with a good degree of familiarity with the requirements of the syllabus, and their explanations are clear and precise. They provide the students with a very good model for tackling standard mathematical problems. In the better lessons, processes and solutions are examined to reveal underlying structures and help deepen the students understanding of the key concepts.

121. Leadership is very good, and the progress of the students is monitored very well. The course is effectively organised, and the students speak very well of the quality of the provision that they receive. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The students' attainment has improved, with particularly impressive results in 2002. There have also been improvements in the quality of the teaching and learning.

SCIENCE

The focus of the inspection was on physics and chemistry.

Physics

The overall quality of provision in physics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above the national average by the end of Year 13.
- Students have very good attitudes to learning.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Insufficient use is made of assessment data to improve the performance of individuals and improve curriculum planning.
- Insufficient use is made of information and communication technology to develop students' learning.

Commentary

122. The GCE A-level examination results in 2002 were above those of other schools nationally. The proportion gaining higher grades, A and B were above average and all students gained a pass. There were no significant differences between the performances of male and female students or between those of different ethnic heritage. In 2003 the overall results and the proportion of students gaining A and B passes were lower than in 2002.

123. Students' achievement overall is good. This is as a result of good teaching and good attitudes to learning by most of the students.

124. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which they use well when demonstrating practical activities and when assessing students' learning with probing questions. Students learn well because the teaching is often challenging, lessons have a lively pace and teachers expect a high quality of work. Insufficient opportunities are available for students to develop their own information and communication technology skills during lessons although a start has been made in addressing this issue. Assessment procedures are satisfactory and formally assessed work is regularly marked. However, assessment data is not used effectively to help individual students make better progress or to help curriculum and lesson planning.

125. Leadership of the subject, by the head of science is good. She provides a good teaching role model and has influenced the recent introduction of more interesting lessons which result in very good levels of student participation. However, the use of data to improve forward planning and self-review is underdeveloped. Since the time of the last inspection standards have continued to steadily rise and improvement has been satisfactory overall.

Chemistry

The overall quality of provision in chemistry is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of attainment are very high.
- Teachers are able, well-qualified and authoritative.
- Teaching is very good, stimulating and challenging students to work hard.
- Practical assignments are very effectively used to enhance learning.
- Students are highly motivated and eager to learn.
- Teachers and students show mutual respect and relationships are mature and conducive to learning.

Commentary

126. Results at A-level are very good and much better than at the time of the last inspection. There is a high proportion of A and B grades compared to other schools nationally and a 100 per cent pass rate during the past two years. Achievement is very high; students who attained highly at GCSE are challenged to continue to achieve their potential, and expectations of those with lesser attainment at GCSE are equally high.
127. Teaching was very good overall in the lessons observed. Despite their relative inexperience of teaching at A-level, the teachers are credible and authoritative. The climate in lessons is calm and conducive to learning. The students concentrated and apply themselves very well to their work. They are highly motivated and self-directing and the teachers treat them as adults. The pace and depth of learning are maintained at a high level and are well-suited to the attainment of the highest standards. Progress is monitored through regular setting and marking of assessments. Coverage of the syllabus is thorough and provides good preparation for the examinations and students' future careers.
128. Practical work is used very effectively to enhance learning and students are confident and capable in the use of equipment. Practical assignments are conscientiously written-up and thoroughly and challengingly marked. The resources available are very good and the outstanding technician team is deployed to excellent advantage.
129. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of chemistry together with the head of science have clear and imaginative ideas for the development of the work of the department. Teaching and the utilisation of resources are very well-organised. Attainment and achievement are carefully monitored so that steps can be taken to ensure that standards are maintained and improved.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

The A-level information and communication technology courses were sampled.

Overall, the quality of provision in information and communication technology is now **very good**, due to very recent improvements in leadership and management. Standards at AS-level and A-level are high, with results above the national average. The quality of teaching is now very good, with appropriate demands being made on students. The project work seen in folders, exercise books and electronic records was a high standard.

HUMANITIES

The work in government and politics, history and classical civilisation were inspected in depth. The work in geography was sampled. The geography A-level GCE results are well above average. Standards are high compared to those found in sixth forms nationally. Students are highly motivated and show excellent attitudes to work because teaching is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge for work at this level and students are very well prepared for examinations. Extensive use of case studies and field courses, including a residential field course, provide excellent opportunities for investigation and independent research. The leadership and management of the subject are very good, have consistently high standards and results have been maintained.

Government and Politics

The overall quality of provision in government and politics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved to above average and most students achieve well.
- Students learn well because of their positive attitudes and the mostly effective teaching.
- Students are not always motivated in lessons because teaching at times is not stimulating and the activities planned are not sufficiently challenging to the most able.
- The sharing of good practice through the monitoring of teaching is undeveloped.

Commentary

130. Examination results have significantly improved since the previous inspection. In 2002 results were average, but they improved in 2003. This is because of closer monitoring of students' progress and more emphasis on developing students' learning skills in lessons.
131. The Year 12 AS-level students understand very well the strengths and weaknesses of alternative voting systems. Year 13 students confidently discuss the main features of the American presidential electoral process. They effectively apply their knowledge of current political events in America to political theory and are aware of the views of different political scientists. All students use their very good literacy skills for enquiry and recording evidence from a range of sources. More confident and able students use their good analytical and speaking skills to present their arguments incisively and clearly. However, some lower attaining students, especially in Year 12, are less confident about speaking and do not always support their views with detailed analysis in their written work.
132. Teaching is mostly effective because teachers use their subject knowledge well to plan a variety of tasks. In some lessons there are now more opportunities for students to study by themselves on challenging enquiries, which are promoting more skills of analysis and independent thought. However, not all teachers use rigorous enough questioning to make students think critically or defend their opinions. Nor do they invite challenges from others rather than only from themselves. This restricts the achievement of the most able students. Up-to-date resources, such as political review, are used well. However, teaching is far less effective when opportunities are missed to make topics exciting with video resources or thinking empathetically, such as Year 12 students reliving the impact of Princess Diana's death on political attitudes. Marking is generally thorough, though it is inconsistent in annotating the text to point out weaknesses. The students' strong interest and motivation produce very good working relationships in the classroom. This encourages good learning with students readily participating in classroom discussions. The effectiveness of this is occasionally constrained by inadequate timing of the lesson so that achievement by the end is not adequately assessed or learning objectives met.
133. The subject is well led with clear direction. Improvement has been good since the last inspection. However, good practice is not adequately shared as there is no systematic classroom observation within the department.

History

The overall quality of provision for history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards have improved to above average and students achieve well.
- Very good teaching with well-planned emphasis on individual enquiry work ensures students make good progress.
- The students' very positive attitudes to their work helps them to learn well.
- Students are not consistently challenged by rigorous questioning in lessons to think more critically.
- The sharing of good practice through monitoring of teaching is undeveloped.

Commentary

134. Examination results at A and AS-levels have recently improved to above the national average and are now in line with the school's other results. This has been due to a closer monitoring of students' progress, a change to a more appealing syllabus and more attention to meeting the learning objectives planned in lessons.
135. Year 12 AS students have a good understanding of the characteristics of the Swinging Sixties, while Year 13 students understand well the nature of Stalin's regime. Students show good skills of individual enquiry, recording of evidence from a range of sources and group discussion, encouraged by stronger emphasis on group research work than previously. However, some lower attaining students, especially in Year 12, are less confident about speaking, although their literacy skills generally match others.
136. Teachers use their subject knowledge effectively to plan a variety of tasks, often based on a range of stimulating resources, especially 'History Review' articles. There are now more opportunities for students to study by themselves on challenging enquiries, which are developing their skills of analysis and independent thought. Students feel well supported by the teachers, especially through extra revision classes before examinations. The generally thorough marking and target setting for improvement also promotes their progress. Teachers benefit considerably from students' strong motivation and very positive attitudes to learning, which enable them to teach effectively. This produces very good working relationships in the classroom and an atmosphere where nearly all students are ready to participate in discussion. The effectiveness of this is constrained by inadequate use of rigorous questioning to make students defend their opinions or invite challenges from others.
137. The head of department provides a clear vision and direction. Improvement has been good since the last inspection as examination results are thoroughly analysed and positively responded to. The team of teachers is committed to improvement. However, the sharing of good practice is inhibited because the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is undeveloped.

Classical civilisation

The overall quality of provision in classical civilisation is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement is very good because teaching is consistently very good.
- The attitudes of the students are excellent and this enhances their learning.
- The department is led and managed very well.
- The curriculum enriches students' understanding of the subject.

Commentary

138. The standards in Latin and classical civilisation are very good because of very good teaching and the excellent attitudes of the students. That high standards are being maintained can be seen from the relatively large numbers who study classical civilisation in the sixth form. Since 2000 all entrants have gained a good examination grade and this is very good achievement, especially as some of the students had not studied Latin at GCSE.
139. Students' attitudes are excellent because of their mature approach to study. They take real responsibility for their own learning and act as learning resources to each other. This successfully promotes their knowledge and widens their experience using Latin.
140. Teaching strategies in the sixth form are well suited to the age and maturity of the students. They are given, and welcome, the opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning, under the guidance of the teacher. Teaching is very good overall. For example, teachers have an excellent command of the subject. They engage with students in what is frequently a shared learning experience, so that progress in lessons is very rapid. The focus on literacy techniques when analysing Latin texts enables students to describe accurately and with confidence how Roman authors use language for effect and to communicate emotion. This also supports their understanding of poetry and prose in English and other languages. Very good marking of students' work ensures that students know exactly what they must do to improve. Clear guidance on coursework and exam technique is a key feature in ensuring their success at A-Level. Visits to Italy and Greece enhance student's understanding of the ancient world. The opportunity to study ancient Greek in a weekly extra-curricular lesson is a particularly enriching experience, much appreciated by the students, who find the subject stimulating and challenging. Provision for classics in the sixth form is led and managed very well. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

No courses in this curriculum area were inspected.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The work in **art** and **theatre studies** was sampled. The overall quality of provision for theatre studies is **very good**. The overall standards achieved by students are very good. As with GCSE drama, the issue for some post-16 students is that many of them have had limited prior experience before joining the examination course. However, they benefit from teaching that is always at least very good. They are challenged to develop their analytical and critical skills as well as improve their dramatic performances. However, not all lessons have precisely focused objectives to ensure that the time available is used to its best possible effect. The teacher in charge provides a very effective role model in terms of performance practice and evaluates examination results carefully. The quality of work in art and design is **very good**. Teaching is very good and tasks are set that challenge students to produce work of a very high standard. On-going assessment is very good and students know what they must do to improve the standard of their work.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

No subjects were inspected in depth, but the work in physical education was sampled. In physical education students attain above average standards. One lesson in Year 13 was observed in which good teaching promoted much well-informed discussion and students made clear gains in their knowledge and understanding. Previous examination results have fluctuated, but have always been above average and in line with most other school subjects.

BUSINESS

The work in business studies and economics were inspected in depth.

Business studies

The overall quality of provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examinations results were very high at AS-level in 2002, but considerably weaker in 2003.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.
- There are not enough links with businesses to promote students' first-hand experience of business.
- Good teaching and learning ensures students achieve well.
- Very good relationships between teachers and students.
- Insufficient use of information and communication technology.

Commentary

141. Whilst a high pass rate at AS level in 2003 ensured that standards were above national standards these results were well below the very high standard achieved in 2002 when more than 50 per cent of candidates achieved A/B grades. The staffing difficulties that help to explain these inconsistent results have now been resolved and the overall standard of work seen in lessons observed was good. The more able students successfully apply their understanding of business theory to real business problems and draw intelligent conclusions. Most students have a very good understanding of the workings of the business world and are able to articulate this clearly and accurately. The written work observed is consistent with these high standards and several students produce impressive written answers to challenging questions.
142. Teaching is good overall with some examples of excellent practice and the students learn and achieve well as a result. The teachers, all of whom have very secure subject knowledge, are well matched to the needs of the curriculum. The lesson objectives are always shared with the students, lessons progress at a good pace and a variety of interesting and challenging tasks are set. There is a very good rapport between the students and the teachers who understand the needs of their students well. Whilst the students do use information and communication technology, this is not sufficiently developed to support students' research and aid their presentation of assignments. A-level students do not have easy access to information and communication technology resources in their teaching rooms and this restricts the quality of their work. Equally important is the under-development of business links, as contacts with the world of work provide a vocational context for students' learning. The good achievement of the students reflects their positive attitudes to learning. They show genuine interest, work hard and collaborate most effectively when working in pairs and small groups.
143. The subject is very well led. The head of department is well organised, conscientious and committed to the students' success. A new homework, marking and assessment strategy is in place and beginning to have a positive impact on learning by raising student awareness

of what that know. All information is openly shared with teachers, students and their parents, to everyone's benefit. This is a relatively new subject at post-16 and was not taught at the time of the last inspection. It is proving an extremely popular choice for students.

Economics

The overall quality of provision in economics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very high standards achieved by students.
- Very good teaching leads to very positive student motivation and achievement.
- Very good, committed leadership have ensured excellent improvement in the subject.
- Insufficient use of information and communication technology.
- Insufficient support for the identified gifted and talented students.

Commentary

144. A-level results were very high in 2003 and 2002 when 50 per cent of students achieved A grades. These very high standards were also evident in the lessons observed and in the scrutiny of the students' work. Students are articulate, confident, very well informed and very keen to learn. Their written work is impressive, including high quality analytical work, problem solving and the successful application of theory to real world situations.

145. Teaching and learning are both very good with some excellent practice evident. The teachers know their students well, plan lessons effectively and ensure a positive working environment. Most lessons are conducted at a good pace and include different and appropriate challenging tasks. Students respond with interest and enthusiasm and as result they work at or near their capacity and make significant progress in their knowledge and understanding. In some cases difficult economic concepts are taught in an inspiring and highly effective way. Students do not have sufficient access to information and communication technology when researching and completing assignments. Very able students are not given an organised programme of extension work. Students' learning was especially effective when working in pairs or small groups. There was genuine, focussed interaction and significant student initiative shown.

146. Leadership and management of the subject are both very strong and the four specialist teachers work effectively as a unit. The head of department is confident, observant and forward-looking. Comprehensive and analytical assessment procedures are in place and a very good new homework and marking strategy is beginning to have positive results. Teachers, students and their parents, in order to motivate and plan future learning, share the constructive analysis of each student's attainment and potential. Very good and effective support and guidance is provided for the two newly qualified teachers in the department. All documentation is thorough, clear and acted upon in the interests of the students. The improvement in the quality of the provision has been first class with a year on year improvement in results since 1998.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

No courses in this curriculum area were inspected.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

No courses in this curriculum area were inspected.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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