

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **RINGWOOD SCHOOL**

Ringwood

LEA area: Hampshire

Unique reference number: 116496

Headteacher: Mr A Maw

Lead inspector: Mr I Hodgkinson

Dates of inspection: 13<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> October 2003

Inspection number: 260034

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1,437
School address:	Parsonage Barn Lane Ringwood Hampshire
Postcode:	BH24 1SE
Telephone number:	01425 475000
Fax number:	01425 473063
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Canon J Turpin
Date of previous inspection:	October 1997

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

As the only secondary school in Ringwood, a busy market town in the New Forest in Hampshire, the school is very much a part of its local community. Links with the community are excellent, and have a very positive effect on the learning of pupils and the quality of education they receive. The school attracts pupils from the villages and district beyond the town, and applications from the next county have meant that the school is over-subscribed and regularly exceeds its standard admissions number. It has continued to grow strongly since the last inspection. With 1,437 pupils on roll it is much larger than most secondary schools, and is nearly 50 per cent larger than when the school was last inspected in 1997. Indeed, it has doubled in size over a decade.

The school has a comprehensive intake and draws pupils from a wide range of attainment levels and social circumstances, though on the whole its pupils come from an area where social and economic conditions are relatively favourable. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals is below average. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school in Year 7 is above average. Pupils are mostly white British or of other white ethnicity. There are 16 pupils of dual heritage, and six pupils of Bangladeshi and five of Chinese heritage. There are three pupils who are beginners in speaking English. Four Travellers are on the school's roll. Slightly more pupils than usual for a school of this size join and leave the school outside the usual admission time.

The proportion of those pupils identified as having special educational needs is broadly average, and the proportion of those with statements of special educational needs is below average. Most pupils who need support beyond action which can be taken by the school itself have emotional, behavioural or specific learning difficulties or speech and communication disorders. There are three pupils with physical impairments in the main 11-16 school, and one in the sixth form.

At the time of this inspection, the school had just acquired specialist Language College status. It has Investor in People status and the Sportsmark Award.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20588	Mr I Hodgkinson	Lead inspector	Business education, health & social care
9003	Mr B Findley	Lay inspector	
18967	Mrs B Loydell	Team inspector	Mathematics
30648	Mr B Skelton	Team inspector	English
19043	Dr D Lewis	Team inspector	Science
18032	Ms I Randall	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
18188	Ms C Thompson	Team inspector	Design and technology
30743	Mr N Cowell	Team inspector	Geography Special educational needs
1769	Mr M Holohan	Team inspector	History Psychology
15023	Mr A Haouas	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages English as an additional language
22783	Mr S Block	Team inspector	Music
15724	Ms M Thompson	Team inspector	Physical education Leisure and tourism
30758	Mrs E Ing	Team inspector	Religious education
20395	Ms C Rowe	Team inspector	Physical education
4359	Ms W Hola	Team inspector	Mathematics sixth form
17530	Ms M Cureton	Team inspector	English sixth form
5241	Dr C Millband	Team inspector	Biology sixth form
20533	Mr D Rogers	Team inspector	Art and design

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Ringwood is a very good school.** It provides its pupils with education of a high quality, and they achieve very well. The school has a rigorous approach to the evaluation of its own success while fostering very warm relationships and high morale among its staff and pupils. **It gives good value for money.**

The school has very many strengths. Its main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Leadership and management of the school are outstanding.
- The school's systems for using assessment information to guide its planning are excellent.
- Pupils benefit from comprehensive monitoring of their attitudes and progress; pupils' attitudes are very good, they behave very well, and make very good progress.
- Links with the community are excellent, and support the quality of education exceptionally well.
- The school is held in high regard by its parents, pupils and community.
- The quality and breadth of the curriculum are very good, and opportunities for enrichment through activities outside lessons are excellent.
- The school does not offer sufficient planned opportunities to develop pupils' awareness of life in multicultural, multi-ethnic Britain.

The school has made very good improvements since its last inspection in 1997, when standards were good and the quality of education very good. Excellent progress has been made against the key issues raised at the last inspection. Assessment of pupils is now an outstanding feature of the school and has played an important part in raising standards and achievement still further. The quality of leadership, management and planning in subjects is now mostly very good. There has been excellent improvement in sixth form provision.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Ringwood School performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2000	2001	2002	2002
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A	A	A	A
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	N/a	A	A	

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

#### Standards achieved overall are very good

- Standards of pupils by Year 9 overall are above average, and pupils achieve well. Standards and national test results are high in mathematics and science, although pupils have performed less well in English tests over the last two years. There is some underachievement in geography in Years 7 to 9.
- Standards seen among pupils in Years 10 and 11 are well above average and their achievement at GCSE, where results have improved faster than the national trend, is very good. Based on the capabilities of the pupils, recent English GCSE results have been weaker than they should have been, especially for boys, but standards in English have now improved.
- Standards of work in Years 12 and 13 are well above average, and have improved greatly since the last inspection. Students achieve very well. They work hard, and show the abilities to work independently, solve problems logically and think critically.
- Pupils with particular needs, including the able and talented, those for whom English is an additional language, and those with other special educational needs, achieve very well in the school because of the very good provision made to support them.

**Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very good.** Most pupils develop a strong sense of moral values and social responsibility. The school provides very well for their personal development through a well-planned programme of personal education, and through assemblies and tutorial periods that stimulate thought and reflection on their own values. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very positive; they behave very well, and attendance is high.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is very good. Teaching is very good.**

Teachers' assiduous marking, and the use they make of assessments of pupils' work to plan lessons and other activities, are key strengths which underpin high levels of achievement in this school. These strengths ensure that, in most cases, learning for all pupils is highly purposeful in raising pupils' levels of knowledge, understanding and skill. Resources of many kinds, including computers, are used very well by teachers to make learning effective and enjoyable for pupils.

The curriculum is organised with great flexibility to meet the needs of all pupils. The work-related curriculum in Years 10 and 11 is of a particularly high quality. An extensive range of extra-curricular activities supports pupils' personal and physical development to an outstanding degree. Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is excellent. Support, advice and guidance are very good and based on very effective monitoring of pupils' academic progress and personal development. Links with the community support the quality of education exceptionally well through the provision of resources and opportunities for work-related learning.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management of the school and its sixth form are outstanding.** The school's rapid growth has been exceptionally well led and managed at all levels. Governors, through a combination of professional expertise and close links with the local community, have played an exceptionally strong role in shaping the direction of the school. Governance is, however, unsatisfactory in not ensuring that the school provides the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. The senior leadership team has very high aspirations for the school; it rigorously monitors the performance of the school and its pupils and takes effective action to address weaknesses. The headteacher's outstanding leadership has promoted high standards and accountability for performance while fostering warm and supportive relationships throughout the school.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents and pupils expressed overwhelming satisfaction with the work of the school, particularly with the quality of teaching and how well the school is run. Some parents feel the quality of annual reports on pupils' progress could be improved; the computer-generated statements are not always specific enough to the nature of work done or improvements needed in individual subjects.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The most important thing the school should do to improve is

- Improve the quality of planning to develop pupils' awareness of life in multicultural, multi-ethnic Britain.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that there is sufficient time for all pupils to receive the locally agreed syllabus for religious education in Years 10 and 11.

## THE SIXTH FORM AT RINGWOOD SCHOOL

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is an excellent, cost-effective sixth form**, and its students achieve very well. It has made outstanding improvement since the last inspection; results improved strongly and are now well above the national average.

The main strengths are:

- Standards of work are well above average in most subjects.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Lessons are stimulating, challenging, and employ a very good range of methods.
- Students' attitudes to learning and their personal development are excellent.
- The sixth form benefits from outstanding leadership, which promotes high standards, high morale and excellent relationships between students and teachers.
- Sixth-formers participate fully in school activities and provide very good role models for pupils in other years.
- There are no significant weaknesses in sixth form provision.

### 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. Subjects looked at in detail are highlighted in bold type.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	<b>Good</b> in <b>English</b> , where students achieve well in response to their teachers' impressive subject knowledge. <b>Very good</b> in <b>French</b> , where teachers' high expectations promote effective use of the language by students. In German, too, very good teaching promotes very effective oral work.
Mathematics	<b>Very good</b> . Teachers have expert knowledge and some of the teaching is outstanding. Students achieve very well.
Science	<b>Very good</b> in <b>biology</b> where teachers have compelling subject expertise and students achieve very well. Excellent teaching was seen in both chemistry and physics, where standards are high.
Information and communication technology	<b>Very good</b> . Students' achievement is very good as a result of very good teaching in well-equipped computer rooms.
Humanities	<b>Very good</b> in <b>psychology</b> where standards are high and students learn to apply theoretical concepts with maturity. Students achieve very well in history where essay writing and research skills are particularly well taught. Standards have been more variable in geography, but teaching is currently very good.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	<b>Very good</b> in <b>graphic products</b> . Students' design ideas are unique and imaginative, and an experienced team of teachers manages students' learning with skill and humour.
Visual and performing arts and media	<b>Good</b> in <b>art</b> where results have been around the national average but represent mostly good achievement for the students concerned. <b>Satisfactory</b> in <b>music</b> , where achievement is sound but some students lack confidence.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	<b>Good</b> in <b>leisure and recreation</b> where students achieve well because their individual needs are very well provided for.

Business	<b>Very good.</b> Students learn to apply theory very well in analysing business behaviour, under careful guidance from their teachers
General education	<b>Very good</b> lessons were seen in the sixth form enrichment programme, including performing arts and Japanese.

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

## **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

As in the rest of the school, assessment systems are excellent. Students and teachers know the grades which students should achieve, based on their previous exam results, and their progress is monitored rigorously in the light of these very clear targets. Tutors, in association with the head and deputy head of sixth form, carefully check the progress of their tutees and monitor the quality of education they receive. Careers education is very well managed and students are very well prepared for making choices about courses through the school, or training and course opportunities elsewhere. Although there is an absence of courses below advanced level on offer in the school, students are well advised on such courses that are available in other institutions. Students' skills of literacy, numeracy and use of information and communication technology (ICT) are generally good and well supported in individual subjects; a recently widened scheme to audit such skills and put in place programmes of support for those in need should ensure that sound key skills support learning for all. Students in the sixth form feel very well prepared for their courses and the drop-out rate and change of courses is very low. Sixth form students value the influence they have in the school through their involvement in sixth form and school councils.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM**

The sixth form benefits from the excellent and energetic leadership of the head of sixth form and the pastoral team he manages, under the careful direction of the governors and senior leadership team. Together, they have built a thriving sixth form, the success of which is based on the support and care given to each individual student. Teachers and managers know how well students are doing because they use assessment information very well to monitor students' progress and the quality of education. The leadership of the sixth form has also created a terrific sense of enthusiasm for learning among students who very much enjoy being part of the sixth form and taking part in its many activities. Relationships between students and staff are excellent.

## **STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

Students' views of the sixth form are highly positive. Nearly all students say, through their questionnaire responses, that they enjoy being part of the sixth form, feel that they are well taught and that the sixth form is well managed. Their questionnaire responses raised some questions over the quality of personal and careers advice to students, but inspectors found that these were of a high quality, and students did not pursue these matters as concerns in discussion with inspectors.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

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

Pupils achieve very well at Ringwood School. GCSE and advanced level results are well above average and have improved strongly.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Examination results are well above the national average, at GCSE and advanced levels.
- By Year 11, and in the sixth form, pupils achieve very well in relation to their capabilities.
- National test results for Year 9 pupils have been well above the national average over time in mathematics and science.
- National test and GCSE results in English have been below the levels expected, given pupils' capabilities, for the last two years. Standards have now improved, though, and achievement is satisfactory.
- There is some underachievement in geography in Years 7 to 9.

#### Commentary

1. Pupils' attainment, when they enter the school in Year 7, is a little above the national average. In national tests at the end of Year 9, results have been consistently well above average overall. This indicates good achievement across Years 7 to 9. The table below shows that, in mathematics and science in particular, results have been strong when compared to national averages.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	34.9 (33.3)	33.3 (33.3)
mathematics	39.1 (37.5)	35.3 (34.7)
science	37.9 (37.0)	33.7 (33.3)

*There were 244 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

2. Analysis of the 2003 Year 9 test results shows that pupils did well in relation to their previous Year 6 national test results in mathematics and especially in science. Lower attainers and middle attainers did particularly well in science. The school's challenging targets for the 2003 tests were met in mathematics and science, though not for English. In English, test results have been below the levels expected for the last two years, but improved somewhat from 2002 to 2003: they were average in 2002 and above average in 2003. In 2002, English test results were very low when compared with those in schools with pupils of a similar prior attainment level; 2003 results, though much improved, still indicate some underachievement, particularly among lower and middle attaining girls. The school has recognised the weaknesses in English results and has taken much action to address the problems, including the restructuring of the department, new approaches to teaching English and strengthening literacy across all subjects. These strategies are yielding success; inspection of English confirmed that standards are now above average by Year 9 and achievement is satisfactory.
3. By Year 9, attainment overall is above average, and pupils achieve well. This is the case for most subjects. Achievement is particularly good in French, German, Spanish and history. In geography, there is underachievement across Years 7 to 9 because, while standards overall

are at nationally-expected levels, pupils do not work to the higher levels of which they are capable.

4. GCSE results are well above national averages. In 2002 they were also well above the averages for schools with pupils who had a similar prior attainment in their Year 9 tests. GCSE results improved faster than the national trend to 2002, and results continued to improve strongly in 2003 when the school exceeded its challenging targets and 68 per cent of pupils gained five GCSE passes at grades A\*-C.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	62 (61)	50 (48)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	97 (95)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (96)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	46.7	39.8

*There were 209 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

5. Pupils achieve very well in most subjects, including mathematics and science, in Years 10 and 11; attainment is high, and pupils build strongly on the very secure knowledge, understanding and skill (and very good work habits) secured in Years 7, 8 and 9. In design and technology, for example, presentation of food technology coursework is outstanding, practical work in resistant materials using computer-aided design and manufacture is of a professional quality, and some graphic designs are stunning. In religious education is achievement judged less than good, though still satisfactory, because pupils not taking the examined course are given very little lesson time to raise their attainment in the subject. Achievement in mathematics and science is high, with GCSE results that are well above average. Current achievement in English is satisfactory, although GCSE results in English language in the last two years have shown underachievement, especially for boys.
6. Over the last two years, a lower than average proportion of pupils have gained the highest grades of A\* and A in a number of subjects. Inspectors gave this issue much focus during the inspection, as school analysis confirmed that fewer than expected were reaching the highest grades in some subjects. The reasons for this were identified as partly subject-specific and partly due to the heavy expectations placed on higher attainers in the school. For example, higher attainers used to do three sciences rather than two; higher attainers in mathematics are 'fast tracked' to AS level in Year 11; in ICT, pupils have been taking exam courses for one lesson per week. Inspectors are satisfied that, overall, higher attainers in the school achieve very well by Year 11.
7. The achievement of pupils with particular needs, including the able and talented, those for whom English is an additional language, and those with other special educational needs, is very good. They make the same very good progress as other pupils because teachers understand their needs and plan to meet them. Where pupils with special needs are supported in classes by learning support assistants this usually raises their achievement.
8. The quality of pupils' work throughout is supported by good skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing, effective use of number, and a good capacity to use computers independently.

## Sixth Form

9. Standards of attainment are high in the sixth form. 2002 A-level and AS average points were well above the national average overall; they were well above average for boys and above average for girls. Boys' results improved in 2002 so that their average points score was higher than that of girls. Analysis of those results shows that the students did very well compared with other students nationally who gained similar GCSE results to theirs. Results in 2003 produced an overall average points score which was nearly the same as that for 2002, and they also indicate very good achievement for the students involved. AS results were overall one grade higher than predicted on the basis of students' GCSE results. There has been very strong improvement in results in the sixth form since the last inspection, when results were around the national average.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	100	94.8
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	40.9	39.4
Average point score per pupil	299.4 (286.1)	263.3 (na)

*There were 83 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

10. In most of the eleven subjects looked at in detail on this inspection, achievement is very good, and standards are well above average. Only in music is achievement less than good (though it is still satisfactory) because some of the students lack confidence. Generally, however, students work to very high standards and develop strongly the higher level skills of applying theory to the analysis of problems. They think critically, and argue a case well. In French and German, students are particularly fluent and confident in speaking the languages. Design ideas in product design are imaginative and innovative.
11. Students' key skills of communication, use of number, and especially the use of computers, are good and contribute positively to their achievement in subjects.

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

Pupils have **very good** attitudes to learning and they behave **very well**. Most develop very maturely during their time at the school. The attitudes, behaviour and personal development of students in the sixth form are outstanding. Attendance and punctuality are also very good.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There are excellent attitudes across all areas in the sixth form.
- Behaviour is polite and considerate around the school.
- Pupils have supportive relationships with staff and with each other.
- Staff promote a strong learning ethos and high expectations of pupils.
- Pupils show growing independence, especially in the sixth form.
- Pupils give excellent support for extra-curricular activities.
- There is a strong sense of responsibility for the school and wider community.
- Assemblies and tutorial periods contribute strongly to pupils' personal development.
- Monitoring of attitudes and behaviour is very good.
- Monitoring and follow up of attendance is very good.
- Pupils do not always have the confidence to report bullying and racial name-calling.
- Pupils need to develop greater awareness of life in multicultural and multi-ethnic Britain.

## Commentary

12. The development of pupils' attitudes is a highly successful area because the school has established a community in which learning expectations are high, rules are made clear and relationships between pupils and staff are supportive. Pupils grow increasingly mature and independent and, by the end of the sixth form, demonstrate a deep sense of care for others and for their environment. Consequently, pupils enjoy their time because they feel the school is well run, teaching is made interesting and pupils are trusted to do things on their own. Extra-curricular clubs are very well attended even, at times, in competition with homework.
13. Behaviour is also kept very good through careful supervision and monitoring. Levels of disruptive behaviour among a very few pupils, mostly boys, in Years 7 and 8 are not so evident by Years 10 and 11, where pupils are more settled in a working discipline. The small number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are well integrated. Pupils speak of incidents of bullying and racial name-calling that are not always reported to members of staff, although none was apparent during the inspection. Those events brought to the attention of staff are said to be dealt with very well, so that pupils generally feel safe and comfortable in school. The effectiveness of school measures is reflected in the very low rate of exclusions, with no pupil being permanently excluded during the past six years.

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1,303	4	0
White – Irish	8	0	0
White – any other White background	25	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	4	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	10	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	6	0	0
Chinese	5	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	35	0	0

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

14. Most pupils develop a strong sense of moral values and social responsibility, because the school provides very well for their personal development, through a well-planned programme of personal education, assemblies and tutorial periods that effectively stimulate thought and reflection on their own values. Provision is very broad and includes input through such activities as an Eco Project, an extra-curricular club involving pupils from all year groups. Cultural development is also provided for very well within subjects, especially in geography and history, but not enough prominence is given to raising pupils' general awareness of cultures of all pupils in the school or life in multicultural Britain.
15. Attendance has remained consistently high over the years and pupils keep good time. Unauthorised absence and truancy is very low because the school has very effective arrangements for following up on concerns.

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

Authorised absence	
School data	7.6
National data	7.8

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.4
National data	1.2

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

**Sixth Form**

16. By the time students reach the sixth form they demonstrate very high levels of maturity. This impacts particularly well on relationships with staff and the excellent attitudes to learning and standards of behaviour that provide such a good role model for younger pupils. Assemblies and tutorial periods provide very high levels of challenge over moral issues, which deepens levels of discussion and also extends students' spiritual, social and cultural awareness through the range of topics covered. Overseas students make an important contribution to the knowledge of other cultures for other students. Students make excellent use of opportunities for independence in their work, such as a module on problem-solving without tutor influence, in which they show impressive teamwork skills. They also take a keen interest in school activities and show a deep sense of care for others and for their environment, such as the high proportion who support the Eco Project and through the time they devote to community service.

**QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The overall quality of education provided by the school is very good. Pupils are very well taught by specialists whose expertise produces innovative approaches and some excellent lessons. Pupils learn very well and with much enthusiasm. A very good, well balanced curriculum is organised with flexibility to meet individual needs and enhanced by an excellent range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. Pupils have access to advice, support and guidance of a very high quality and there is excellent care for pupils' welfare and safety.

**Teaching and learning**

The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. Pupils are very well taught by specialists who have real expertise; they learn very well and with much enthusiasm. The assessment of pupils' work and progress is outstanding.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers have a very good command of their subjects.
- Teachers mark work thoroughly, and give pupils very clear advice on how to improve their work.
- Teachers' use of assessment information to plan for improvement is outstanding.
- Teachers use a range of resources, including computers and the community, very effectively to help pupils learn in exciting, innovative ways.
- Teachers offer pupils much support in learning outside of lessons, especially in the sixth form.
- Pupils work hard, and show much enthusiasm in lessons.
- In geography in Years 7 to 9, and in religious education, teachers' expectations of pupils' work standards and skill levels are not always high enough.

## Commentary

17. Teachers' assiduous marking, and the use they make of assessments of pupils' work to plan lessons and other activities, are key strengths which underpin high levels of achievement in this school. These strengths ensure, that in most cases, learning for all pupils is highly purposeful in raising pupils' levels of knowledge, understanding and skill.

### **Example of outstanding practice**

*The school uses assessment extremely well at all levels to show students how to improve and to monitor the quality of education they receive. Senior managers, heads of subject and year heads scrutinise in detail the way in which individual pupils, classes and subjects perform in assessments, tests and examinations against the standards they should achieve given their prior attainment. Where underachievement is identified, support is put in place for pupils, teachers or whole subjects. Teachers set and mark work regularly and to very high standards, so that pupils know exactly the level at which they are performing, and what they need to do to improve to meet the very clear targets set for them. The quality of teachers' work in this regard is monitored actively by heads of subject and heads of year, who observe lessons and check pupils' books.*

18. Teachers' high level of expertise is a real strength in many subjects. It allows teachers to adopt exciting and innovative approaches which develop students' skills while stimulating their enthusiasm for learning. This expertise is, for example, a key strength in modern foreign languages, where teaching is often excellent and pupils learn to respond spontaneously in the foreign language. In mathematics, the excellent subject knowledge of teachers provides students with a very high level of challenge, especially in the sixth form. In science, teachers' subject expertise is compelling, and a high proportion of lessons seen were excellent as a result of the excellent atmosphere for learning in the classes. In many subjects, resources of many kinds, including computers, are used very well by teachers to make learning effective and enjoyable for pupils. Much effective use is made of computer-aided design and manufacturing equipment in design and technology to raise the quality of pupils' work to professional standards. In health and social care in Year 10, students were highly motivated by their visits to local nursery and playgroup settings and produced some very good work as a consequence.
19. Teachers give of their time freely outside lessons to provide individual support and subject clinics. While the table below indicates that teaching in lessons is of a high quality, much effective teaching and learning goes on beyond the classroom.

### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 215 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
19 (9%)	77 (36%)	77 (36%)	39 (18%)	3 (1%)	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.*

20. Teaching and learning are very good in most subjects at all stages. In English, teaching and learning are good, in religious education they are satisfactory, and in geography in Years 7 to 9 they are unsatisfactory. The very few lessons where teaching and learning were unsatisfactory occurred in Years 7 to 9 because, in religious education and geography, teachers' expectations were not high enough for the standards which could be achieved by the pupils, given their capabilities. This weakness was more marked in geography than in religious education. Lessons seen in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form were better on the whole than lessons in Years 7 to 9. Teachers tend to direct lessons rather more closely in the earlier years, but in the later years give pupils more opportunities to contribute to lessons individually or in groups, thereby engaging pupils more and allowing them to develop their thoughts, skills and creativity.

21. Teaching is very effective for pupils with special educational needs because very good individual education plans make needs, targets and strategies clear. Teachers address pupils' needs very well and, as in science, give very good support in every lesson. Where pupils are supported in classes by learning support assistants, well briefed by the teacher, this raises their achievement. Where pupils are taught in very small classes, as in history and geography, they benefit from teachers skilled in both the subject and in special educational needs and this aids their learning and personal development. All pupils in the school benefit from very close monitoring of their individual progress and very effective planning for their needs. For this reason, pupils who are gifted and talented, and those who have English as an additional language, learn very well.

## Sixth Form

22. Teaching is very good in the sixth form, and some of the excellent features noted above for the lessons in Years 7 to 11 have even more positive effects at sixth form level. The level of teachers' expertise is a strong factor influencing the success of students in many subjects. Teachers have very high expectations of their students which are reinforced through the rigorous marking of work and monitoring of students' progress. In business studies, for example, the need for students to develop higher level skills of critical analysis and evaluation in order to gain higher marks is stressed in all activities. Students are given a great deal of extra support when needed in special sessions organised outside lesson time. Students are encouraged to work very hard, and they have an excellent capacity for individual study. They also collaborate very well in group work. Relationships between teachers and students are excellent.

## The curriculum

Overall the breadth and quality of the curriculum are very good. The curriculum is organised with great flexibility to meet the needs of all pupils. An extensive range of extra-curricular activities supports pupils' personal and physical development to an outstanding degree. The accommodation and resources are very good, as is the staffing.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- A diverse curriculum tailored to meet the pupils' individual needs is in place for all age groups.
- The enrichment of the curriculum both within and beyond lessons is excellent in all subject areas.
- The focus of the school as a language college is well embedded across the curriculum.
- The development of citizenship and moral education are very strong.
- The school does not meet statutory requirements for religious education for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
- The school does not offer the full range of elements of design and technology to pupils in Year 9.

## Commentary

23. A commitment to securing the best education for individual pupils, and an innovative and proactive approach to seeking appropriate high quality courses, means that Ringwood School offers broad curriculum opportunities which are sufficiently flexible to cater very effectively for diverse individual pupil needs. During Years 7 to 9, pupils follow all the National Curriculum subjects and religious education. Good setting arrangements mean that able linguists may take up a second language whilst others can progress fast in mathematics and science and others are given the opportunity to develop literacy and emotional literacy skills in small, supportive groups. In design and technology, however, Year 9 pupils do not have the opportunity to do the full range of design and technology subjects.

### **Example of outstanding practice**

*Pupils for whom it is appropriate are given the opportunity, in Years 10 and 11, to follow a course known as the Integrated Job Related Curriculum. These pupils are able to take 5 or 6 GCSE courses whilst also completing ½ day a week work experience in Year 10 and a full day of work experience in Year 11. In addition, some pupils attend local college courses leading to NVQ's, currently in catering, small animal*

24. In Years 10 and 11, the increasing opportunities for flexibility to meet pupils' needs provides a very good curriculum, however, the curriculum time dedicated to religious education (within the social education programme) is insufficient to meet statutory requirements for those pupils who are not taking GCSE religious education. An excellent job-related curriculum has been devised which enables some students to gain work experience for up to one day a week, attend related college courses for a small portion of the week whilst developing core skills and life skills and working towards five GCSEs in school. These are closely monitored to ensure that the provision is effective. The school has many contacts in the local community and in local colleges, which enables it to find suitable placements for its students. A programme which includes health and social care at GCSE, a certificate in child development and a key skills qualification in communication, is also on offer to selected pupils in Year 10, and is also having a very good effect on the motivation of pupils. It has been developed as part of a local initiative which has attracted Pathfinder support from the Department for Education and Skills.
25. The requirements for collective worship are met. The work of the whole school reflects its designation as a Language College and language work is well embedded across the curriculum. In design and technology, for example, pupils in Year 9 are asked to design packaging for a French perfume using French labelling, whilst other subjects are preparing to teach elements of their courses in target languages and ICT is used to forge links with schools internationally.
26. Whilst there is no overall strategy to develop the provision of gifted and talented pupils, the needs of the most able pupils are well met. Some linguists were able to take French GCSE in Year 10 enabling them to study their second language and also French literature in Year 11. Able mathematicians are able to take GCSEs early and move on to more demanding work. A residential course on the Isle of Wight for very able pupils has enabled them to be further challenged and stimulated with very good outcomes. Individuals with talent are enabled to access the school curriculum on a part-time basis whilst undertaking specific coaching or training elsewhere. Students are encouraged to enter national competitions and arenas for their own development and achieve well in these.
27. The special educational needs co-ordinator's leadership results in a very good programme of support for pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language. There are well-developed contributions from specialist agencies. Funding for special educational needs is generous and managed well so staffing and resources are good. A new suite of rooms, opened this term, means that criticisms of shortcomings identified in the previous report no longer apply. Very successful provision is made for pupils transferring to the school

with a background of learning and behaviour difficulties. Travellers are integrated and supported very well.

28. The school provides an effective programme of personal, social and health education, which is often taught exceptionally well. Pupils learn through a variety of appropriate activities and carefully structured discussion about personal safety, alcohol and drug misuse, sex and relationships and are also given good opportunities to consider their career options. The citizenship programme contributes well to pupils' personal development and understanding of their rights and responsibilities.
29. The curriculum is managed innovatively and with dynamism in order to meet the needs of the pupils. It is continually monitored and evaluated and the school seeks to review provision and establish whether there are better courses on offer on a regular basis.
30. The school curriculum is enriched both by the use of experts' and outsiders' expertise in lessons. There is a wide range of school visits, both at home and abroad, which are clearly focused on learning, and a plethora of extra-curricular opportunities in performing arts, sport, science, citizenship and the humanities. There are very good resources for learning throughout the school, including computers, and these resources are used very well by pupils and teachers. Although the school has absorbed a very large rise in pupil numbers in recent years, careful planning, directed by the governors but with much input from teachers, has ensured that accommodation in most areas is good and contributes positively to learning. Further building work should address shortcomings in music accommodation. Staffing levels for teachers and support staff are excellent overall, and staff recruited are of high quality. There is, however, insufficient technical support in food technology.

## Sixth Form

31. Curricular provision for students in the sixth form is good overall. Some 22 subjects are available at AS and A2 levels, with option blocks created each year to meet demand. Currently, there is the opportunity for students to take a vocational course in leisure and recreation, supplemented by business and other courses in a well-designed work-related package. However, it has not been viable to run courses below advanced level in the sixth form because there is not a strong enough demand for them. Students likely to benefit from these are given individual guidance and support to enable them to apply for one of several local colleges. An extensive range of extra-curricular activities, including Japanese lessons and access to provision leading to a Community Sports Leader Award, support students' personal and physical development.

## Care, guidance and support

Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is **excellent**. Support, advice and guidance are **very good** and based on very effective monitoring. The school provides **very good** opportunities for pupils to express their views and responds well to their ideas.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are rigorous procedures for ensuring the health and safety of pupils.
- There is much analysis and exchange of information on pupils' welfare and progress between members of staff.
- Mechanisms for supporting learning and behaviour are very good.
- 'Drop-in' clinics to support pupils are very effective.
- Careers education and work-related courses are of a high quality.
- Transfer arrangements from lower schools are very good.
- The school council is very effective in getting pupils' voices heard.
- There are no systematic mentoring strategies for pupils not coping well with their schooling.

## **Commentary**

32. Health and safety arrangements are co-ordinated extremely well and expertise is very high in welfare and child protection procedures. Internet safety is managed very effectively. Site inspections, risk assessments and day-to-day procedures are monitored rigorously and information on the database is analysed effectively to verify that procedures are properly carried out and to detect trends, for example through accident records. Risk assessments include every stage of outside visits and other activities, such as assessed homework projects during school holidays.
33. Very good support and guidance is based upon the excellent use of information on pupils, so that links can be made between performance in work with obstacles to learning, such as behaviour, attendance or other personal circumstances. Analysis of data also indicates the effectiveness of particular areas of teaching or the relationships between pupils and staff. The information exchange between pastoral support staff and subject managers is highly effective. A pastoral support group monitors trends in the school, for example by undertaking work sampling in particular areas of work or groups of pupils, to screen those falling behind and determine the best means of support. This team constantly reviews its own effectiveness so that new ways are found to deal with new problems, for example in the way pupils manage their homework. Behaviour management plans are monitored for effectiveness and there are regular 'drop-in' clinics for confidential advice. Job-related courses are effective for some pupils in Years 10 and 11 who are in danger of losing interest in the school curriculum, but there are no formal mentoring arrangements to support pupils as they encounter the difficulties that so hinder their progress. Very good specialist support is provided for a few traveller pupils.
34. There is a very well planned programme of induction for primary school pupils, so that Year 7 pupils feel they know the staff very well, are clear about expectations and that work and friendship groups work well. Parents are overwhelmingly pleased with these arrangements. Sixth-form students transferring from other schools have settled in very well and are pleased with the way the sixth form is run.
35. Careers education is very well managed and pupils very well prepared for making choices about courses through the school, or training and course opportunities elsewhere.
36. Pupils and sixth-form students also value the influence they have in the school through their involvement in year and school councils.

## **Sixth Form**

37. Students in the sixth form feel very well prepared for their courses and the drop-out rate and change of courses is very low. Students who have moved from other schools have settled in very well and are pleased with the way the sixth form is run. Satisfaction with levels of support is very high and students value the very good quality of relationships with members of staff. Students make very good use of opportunities to influence arrangements in the school through their involvement in the sixth form committee. Guidance on careers, or further studying opportunities, are very good and the school works hard to support specialist training through flexible part-time arrangements with other colleges or training providers.

## Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership between school and parents remains **good**. Links with other schools and the community are **excellent**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of information about the work of the school is very good.
- There is strong support from parents for school activities.
- The contribution to learning from the community, particularly from local business, is excellent.
- Joint work with primary schools is very effective.
- There are mutually supportive arrangements with other secondary schools and colleges.
- The prospectus and governing body's annual report to parents have had some omissions in the past.
- Annual reports on pupils' progress do not always include enough specific information about progress in particular subjects.
- There is little formal consultation with the wider parent body over school policy and practice.

### Commentary

38. Parents expressed overwhelming support for the school and had no significant concerns in pre-inspection consultations. Some parents would like better information about their children's progress and to be consulted more over school issues. These concerns are partially justified. Reports on progress do not always make clear enough the specific strengths or weaknesses in subject work. The school consults widely with those parents with whom it has most contact, such as the parent teacher association, but does not consult over customer satisfaction across the whole parent body. Omissions in the prospectus and the governing body's annual report, mainly about school results and targets, are set against extremely good quality information about the work of the school through other media, including a very high quality and range of newsletters.
39. The school works very closely with primary schools over information about pupils and there is particularly effective joint work in English, mathematics and a primary languages project, which supports teaching and professional development for the primary school teachers.
40. Community links are extremely effective because of the longstanding commitment of the school and local organisations, particularly the business community, to work together to support learning. Links with local theatre and sports groups are very strong, and there are active links with local agencies in citizenship. Businesses provide learning resources to the school, such as specialist resources on renewable energy for coursework in physics. Local business provides extremely well for careers work, and gave strong support to the school's acquisition of language college status. The school can rely and plan for this support and is, in turn, becoming an increasingly valuable asset to the community.

### Sixth Form

41. The school involves parents very well when providing support for individual students. There are also very good levels of contact at different stages of the preparation for examinations and higher education. Students support the very high quality of school information through their contribution to publications, such as the Young Citizen. The school has very good liaison arrangements with other schools and colleges to make available courses not provided at a particular school. Students also benefit highly from the contributions made by the business community with specialist knowledge and resources in subjects, such as graphics and physics.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school and its sixth form by the headteacher, senior leadership team and other key staff are outstanding. Governance is very good; governors have played an exceptionally strong role in shaping the direction of the school.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The headteacher's outstanding leadership has promoted high standards and accountability for performance while fostering warm and supportive relationships throughout the school.
- Governors, through a combination of professional expertise and close links with the local community, have played an exceptionally strong role in shaping the direction of the school.
- The senior leadership team has very high aspirations for the school; it rigorously monitors the performance of the school and its pupils and takes effective action to address weaknesses.
- The school's rapid growth has been exceptionally well led and managed at all levels.
- Governors have not ensured that statutory requirements are met for the religious education curriculum in Years 10 and 11; curriculum time for this remains very low, as at the last inspection.

### **Commentary**

42. The school's high and rising standards are due in a large part to management systems which ensure accountability for performance at all levels, and to a leadership style which has inspired and motivated staff and pupils through its supportive approach and celebration of success.
43. The headteacher has outstanding vision for the school and has led the school through numerous significant developments which have maintained its momentum and stimulated fresh ideas. The addition of the sixth form at the time of the last inspection has turned out to be highly successful; the success in securing Language College status at the time of this inspection has produced a palpable sense of excitement and pride within the school and among its many partners in the local community.
44. Governors are very active in support of the school, and bring much professional expertise and local knowledge to help shape its direction. Governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school very well. They have an exceptionally good awareness of the main development issues facing the school, particularly in terms of the growth of student numbers and the opportunities presented in terms of building and development. Governors do, however, need to ensure that the school meets statutory requirements for religious education in Years 10 and 11.
45. Accountability is strong and highly effective throughout the management structure. Pupils have well-defined targets to work towards, based on predictions made in the light of their previous attainment. Underperformance can, therefore, be identified and acted upon. Teachers also have targets to aim for in their classes, based on the same predictors; detailed class-by-class residual analysis shows how classes measured up to predictions and indicate possible strengths or weaknesses in teaching and learning. The same analysis extends to whole subjects. A line management system means that senior managers meet with heads of subjects monthly to discuss issues, including performance data. Pastoral teams, including heads of year, are active in monitoring pupils' work to check on the quality of education they receive.
46. Development planning is very coherent; whole-school development priorities are agreed and subject development plans must address these priorities explicitly. The quality of department development planning varies, but the identification of clear criteria for success has clearly improved since the last inspection. The active line management system ensures that progress against development priorities is regularly reviewed throughout the school, and that senior managers are fully aware of barriers which might prevent ambitions being realised. Senior

managers are active in putting in place support for subjects when needed. Heads of subject are mostly very effective in monitoring standards and planning for improvement.

47. Governors are proud of the quality of special educational needs education and monitor and report on this regularly. The special educational needs co-ordinator's very good leadership results in a very good programme of support across the school with well-developed contributions from specialist agencies.
48. All aspects of the management of staffing are excellent. The school has developed highly effective systems in the areas of performance management, induction for both newly qualified teachers and more experienced staff, professional development and the recruitment, retention, deployment and workload of staff. Managers and governors work together to implement these systems with a high degree of effectiveness and sensitivity, constantly evaluating their impact upon teaching and learning in the school and reviewing procedures where necessary. All levels of staff feel well supported by management and are able to work all the more effectively in this knowledge.
49. Financial planning supports educational priorities very well. The school has become adept at using the financial independence which its foundation status confers to achieve best value in its use of resources and purchase of services. It measures its performance relentlessly against national norms to check on the quality of its provision. Large increases in staff costs will cause the school to draw heavily on its sizeable financial reserves this year, but careful financial management has ensured that spending decisions are made on a sound educational basis. Projections for further growth in pupil numbers should offset the need for cuts in the future.

## Financial information

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

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4,448,360	Balance from previous year	261,994
Total expenditure	4,450,715	Balance carried forward to the next	100,208
Expenditure per pupil	3,296		

50. The school's unit costs were above the average for schools in shire counties in 2002-3. Given the very good achievement and very good quality of education the school provides for students from broadly favourable social and economic circumstances, the school gives good value for money.

## Sixth Form

51. The sixth form benefits from the excellent and energetic leadership of the head of sixth form and the pastoral team he manages, under the careful direction of the governors and senior leadership team. Together, they have built a thriving sixth form, the success of which is based on the support and care given to each individual student. Teachers and managers know how well students are doing because they use assessment information very well to monitor students' progress and the quality of education. The leadership of the sixth form has also created a terrific sense of enthusiasm for learning among students who very much enjoy being part of the sixth form and taking part in its many activities. Relationships between students and staff are excellent.

## PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

## **SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4**

### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

#### **English**

Provision in English is **good**.

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

- The leadership of the subject is improving the content of the curriculum, the effectiveness of the teaching and teamwork within the department.
- Good teaching is leading pupils to improve achievement.
- High expectations and standards promote good responses from pupils.
- Standards in English language are rising generally in Years 7 to 9.
- Boys' attainment in English language at GCSE has been weak.
- There is not enough scope and challenge for individual self-expression and creativity in some lessons.

#### **Commentary**

52. Historically, national test results, at the end of Year 9, had been well above national standards, but they declined significantly in 2002 to be only in line with national levels and low when compared with similar schools. In the 2002 tests, English results were below those in the other two core subjects of mathematics and science. Attainment was low in relation to pupils' prior attainment and indicated unsatisfactory achievement since standards on entry to the school in Year 7 have consistently been above national average standards. The decline in results at age 14 in 2002 was most marked among higher attaining pupils. In 2003, the attainment improved to be above national standards overall, but results still indicated some underachievement, particularly among lower and middle attaining girls. Lower attainment in English, than in other tested core subjects, has been a concern for the department and the school, and much work has been done to address the problem.
53. At GCSE, attainment over the last two years has been consistently just above national standards. In 2002, 61 per cent achieved grades A\*-C but in light of those pupils' prior attainment at Key Stage 3, that represented unsatisfactory achievement. Results were similar, though a little improved, in 2003. A major element of this underachievement was the underachievement of boys, only half of whom attained grades A\*-C, while over 71 per cent of girls attained those grades. In English literature at GCSE, 87 per cent achieved grades A\*-C. This was very high in comparison with national levels and well above their performance in English language. This factor explains the commitment to raising language skills to similarly high levels.
54. Attainment seen now in lessons is above average and pupils' achievement is satisfactory across all years. Pupils' skills in speaking and listening are very good. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that they are given opportunities and helped to write both formal essays and extended creative pieces of high quality. The standard of their reading is good.
55. Teaching and learning are good overall, and a number of very good lessons were seen. There were no unsatisfactory lessons. Marking is very good by all teachers. Precise, pertinent comment recognises individual achievement and suggests ways for pupils to improve. Teachers are also ready to model answers and to offer their own writing for the criticism of pupils so that they might learn from examples. Generally, teachers are ready to listen to pupils and they manage question and answer sessions well with focused questions, well adapted to pupils' ability and confidence. A few lessons were dominated with too much teacher talk. The

consistency of content and methods is a strength of the teaching in the subject. The best lessons are characterised by teachers' very good subject knowledge. They contain a good range of linked tasks, which give pupils a challenging range of activities, including group and individual work, and allow the creative expression of personal views and imaginative responses. In some lessons, the emphasis was strongly on the functions of language and the accuracy in use that the department wants to develop, but there was less opportunity for pupils to develop self-expression through extended creative writing. In good lessons, pupils were asked to experiment with writing, for example poems telling cautionary tales based on 'The Lion and Alfred'; to use knowledge of characters and events to devise imaginary scenes for 'The Crucible'; or to write persuasive speeches inspired by Martin Luther King's 'I Have a Dream'.

56. Not enough pupils' work is displayed to celebrate their achievement. Teachers read aloud very well offering good examples to pupils but pupils had few opportunities to read aloud themselves. When they did, the standard of their reading was good. Opportunities for more able pupils to read ahead are limited when, for organisational reasons, they are not allowed to take texts home.
57. Learning opportunities in English make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. Some ICT skills are taught and pupils read from electronic sources using the Internet for research. When they use ICT for writing it clearly helps them plan and shape their work but they need guidance about presentation skills.
58. Leadership of the subject is very good and has been embraced by the department. A very good review of the curriculum has led to clear and consistent schemes of work being developed for Years 7 to 9 with determined regard to the skills that pupils need by the time they take National Curriculum tests at age 14. Important developments from the National Literacy Strategy and from the Key Stage 3 Strategy in English have been incorporated into very effective programmes of study. Syllabus changes at GCSE have been introduced to make courses more appropriate to the skills of the pupils and thereby help to raise attainment. To go with these changes to the curriculum, a very effective leadership has introduced a consistency in teaching methods throughout the department and there is a sense of a team urgency which is impressive. The management of assessment information is a strength of the department.
59. Over a six-year view the subject has not maintained consistent improvement since the last inspection. In the last year major improvements have started. The new head of department has only been in post since April, but has already been very effective in bringing about major changes in philosophy and practice. She has been very well supported in strengthening the teaching team by the headteacher and by the local education authority in developing the curriculum. This, and the fact that a team of very able teachers welcomes and supports the changes, is a very strong indicator that the subject will continue to develop strongly.

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

60. Other subjects make a very good contribution to developing pupils' skills on speaking, listening, reading and writing. School development plans recognise the importance of developing pupils' reading and writing skills as a means of raising standards. A literacy co-ordinator has been appointed and all teachers have received training in developing pupils' literacy skills, for example in teaching reading for research or strategies to improve pupils' writing. A management group exists and representatives from all subject areas and departments are required to include reading and writing skills in their planning. The English department is planning bridging projects and transition units with feeder schools. The reading and spelling ages of all pupils are assessed when they enter the school, carefully monitored and available on the school's database.
61. During the week of the inspection many examples of good practice were observed in many subjects, especially in the introduction and explanation of key words and concepts. Pupils

studying the history of the First World War were creatively writing diaries and letters 'from the Front'. Pupils produced very good creative writing in French and could do PowerPoint presentations in French. In ICT lessons, a competition to win a Wordpad encouraged boys to write good quality book reviews and the prize itself was a stimulus to further writing. A Year 9 history lesson involved very good spoken English skills in sophisticated role-plays.

## **French, German and Spanish**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is very good and often excellent.
- There have been marked improvements in results by the end of Year 9 and in GCSE.
- The school offers a diverse and rich curriculum with distinctive innovations.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good.
- Pupils' attitudes, irrespective of background and ability, are very positive and have a direct impact on their achievement.
- There are not enough identified opportunities for developing reading on a regular basis and to assess pupils' skills in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils are not sufficiently exposed to authentic sources of language and culture through the use of audio and video broadcasts.

### **Commentary**

62. By the end of Years 9 and 11, standards in French, German and Spanish are above average and well above average for pupils in the top sets. This is a substantial improvement since the last inspection and a direct result of curriculum innovation and improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.
63. At GCSE, results in German and French were above average in 2002 and have markedly improved in French in 2003, with a much increased number of pupils gaining A\* and A grades. For Spanish, the 2003 results were also above average with approximately half the number entered gaining A and B grades. The trends for results over the last three years have been rising and is an indication of the distinctive impact of teaching on the rate of progress pupils make. On the basis of lessons seen during the inspection, evidence from pupils' books and discussions with them, the majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language, achieve very well against their prior attainment.
64. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and often excellent. The level of consistency across languages and classes of teaching to a high standard is a distinctive strength and correlates very strongly with the rate of progress pupils make. Teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and have worked hard in developing methods that are very effective and which result in concrete gains within lessons and over time. Clear and sustained emphasis is put on developing pupils' spontaneous use of the target language with clear ground rules established between pupils and teachers and this is often reflected in the way pupils respond to this expectation. In the majority of lessons, this approach is also reflected in the way most lessons are structured so that pupils are enabled to practise and rehearse the language thoroughly before they are called upon to work in pairs or use the language more independently. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace, and pupils are increasingly challenged as the lesson progresses so that, by the end, the majority is able to build on their previous knowledge and write in sentences, using connectives. The key reason why pupils learn so well is the way teachers enable pupils to move from practice, to role play and then on to more independent use of the language. This inspires a high level of confidence in the pupils which is reinforced by the high level of motivation and the self-discipline they display.

65. The rare occasions where lessons were less effective, or where the impact on learning could have been higher, are when language structures are used as the key focus but without putting them in a context which is personally meaningful for the pupils. There are not enough identified opportunities for developing reading on a regular basis and to assess pupils' skills in this respect in Years 7 to 9.
66. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. The major factor is the quality of teaching which has led to higher standards and better achievement. Both assessment arrangements and the use of data have been deployed to focus on a thorough and careful appraisal of the curriculum, resulting in the 'talk' project and earning the school national recognition as an example of good practice. This has been the result of the sharing of good practice and the clear commitment of teachers to raising pupils' achievement.
67. Leadership and management are very good and have improved since the last inspection. There is a positive ethos of sharing good practice and striving for continuous improvement among members of the team, the majority of whom are double linguists. The recent designation of the school as a specialist language college has been harnessed very effectively to forge links with primary schools, with one teacher working closely with primary colleagues and modelling teaching. Very good provision is made for pupils to go on trips and correspond with their counterparts through the use of e-mail. Pupils are not sufficiently exposed to authentic sources of language and culture through the use of audio and video broadcasts, but plans for new multimedia facilities, as a result of language college status, should address this problem. Although not all pupils are issued with their personal textbook, the use of two exercise books, one of which is used as reference, enables all pupils to develop study skills and maximise their learning through the regular setting of homework. The success of the department is amply reflected in the increasing numbers of pupils opting to study them beyond 16.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are high and improving, especially in GCSE and higher levels at the end of Year 9.
- Assessment procedures are excellent, with thorough marking of pupils' work.
- Monitoring of achievement is very good, through value-added analysis.
- Relationships are very good, and pupils work hard with positive attitudes.
- Teaching is good overall with some excellent features; it is very good in Years 10 and 11.
- The subject is very well led and managed.
- There is inconsistency in teaching quality across the department, with sometimes little variety of learning activities and insufficient use of ICT.
- The spiritual and cultural dimensions of mathematics are neglected.

## Commentary

68. Standards in the 2002 national tests, at the end of Year 9, were well above average on all measures, an increase on previous years and in line with the national trend. In 2003, results improved further, especially for those obtaining Level 6 or above, a dramatic increase to 69 per cent for the higher attaining pupils. Boys achieved better results than girls at all levels, but over time boys' and girls' results have been similar.
69. Results of the GCSE examinations increased steadily up to 2002, in line with the national trend but well above average standards, on all measures. More pupils were entered for mathematics GCSE than nationally and, in 2002, boys' results were much higher than those of girls. In 2003, the proportion of A\*-C grades increased dramatically to 75 per cent, with girls' results better than those of boys, reflecting the known cohort differences. Year 10 top sets are entered for GCSE although not included in published figures until Year 11, and the proportion of higher grades have increased each year with 24 A\* and A grades from this group in 2003.
70. Standards overall are well above national expectations, showing very good achievement from above average standards when pupils entered the school. In Years 7 to 9, standards seen in lessons were not as high as external results indicated, though above national expectations, perhaps because of the time of year and the need to establish structure and ways of working. This initially slowed the pace in some lessons, as teachers made sure basic concepts were secure, such as the Year 7 middle sets rounding off numbers. Good presentation and correct setting out of method is an emphasis in the mathematics department. Pupils keep notes and examples of topics studied in separate books, and use these wisely to revise for the regular topic and full tests, and external tests or examinations. The excellent assessment procedures, along with detailed marking and constructive comments, let pupils know how well they are doing and how to improve. Teachers motivate pupils by their interest and enthusiasm for mathematics and challenge them to tackle more difficult concepts, such as the Year 9 top set recognising the difference between demonstration and proof in dealing with angles in circles. Pupils have positive attitudes and usually respond well to challenge, to achieve very well by the end of Year 9.
71. For all year groups, analysis of previous year's work demonstrated well above national standards in class work, the extensive homework set, and coursework assignments on using and applying mathematics. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 were working at well above national levels overall, with the top set in Year 10 revising types of average and frequency measures, in preparation to embark on the data-handling GCSE coursework, ready to take GCSE at the end of the year. The Year 11 top set is now studying AS modules, intending to continue next year into the sixth form. Each year more pupils are entered for the higher tier GCSE, and more Intermediate tier rather than Foundation; raising pupils' sights and motivating them to achieve beyond initial expectations. Even set 3 in Year 11 are aiming for A\* and A grades, with the teacher running an after-school A\* club to enhance provision for these individuals. Setting across years allows smaller groups for those with low attainment or special educational needs, and learning support assistants also give quality individual attention allowing success even at very low levels. Lunchtime mathematics clinics and after-school clubs give further individual attention and additional motivation to achieve well.
72. Teaching and learning are good overall, and are very good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching has many excellent features such as the use of an interactive whiteboard, fast pace with mental or oral starters, and plenary sessions where pupils summarise learning. Relationships with pupils are very good and teachers circulate well in lessons to help pupils individually. The Key Stage 3 National Numeracy Strategy was introduced well, and has improved planning and the structure of lessons. Interaction of teachers with pupils is very good, often mini whiteboards allow instant assessment of pupils' knowledge and understanding. Mental calculation and instant number bond recognition is improving but is weak for a significant minority of pupils, particularly in older years. Questioning techniques are very good, also a feature in the previous inspection, open-ended and encouraging pupils to verbalise mathematics and explaining

methods and answers. Too often there is limited variety in learning activities, and practical work rarely figures - a criticism also in the previous inspection. There are plans to use ICT more, with some improvement since the previous inspection, but development has been hindered by limited access to computers.

73. Leadership of mathematics is very good. Clear vision and strategic direction is evident, with a commitment to raise achievement of all pupils. The spiritual and cultural dimensions of mathematics are neglected in the otherwise excellent schemes of work, except for an assignment on the use and abuse of statistics in Year 10. The full team of well-qualified mathematicians works well together, with cordial relationships as well as rigorous monitoring and evaluation systems, part of the very good management of the department. Improvement since the previous inspection is good, with improved teaching, more relevant use of calculators, better day-to-day assessment with thorough marking of work and the introduction of pupil self-assessment and target-setting.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

74. Numeracy across the curriculum and whole-staff training days in 2001 have led to greater awareness of methods and mathematical concepts. Posters of numeracy methods and Year 7 booklets are widely used. Co-ordination of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy is good, with regular committee meetings discussing numeracy and other basic skills. Standards of numeracy are good overall, although a minority of pupils is hindered by weak mental calculation and number bond recognition. Good use and development of numeracy was seen in geography, design and technology, physical education and ICT lessons. Excellent graphical work and use of algebra was seen in science, as well as sharp and perceptive evaluation.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership and management of the department are excellent, with excellent clarity of vision, high aspirations, and a high level of unity of purpose.
- Pupils achieve very well.
- Teaching is very good, with a quarter of lessons excellent.
- The curriculum is well designed to meet the needs of students of all abilities.

### **Commentary**

75. Students come into the school with above average scientific attainment. They make very good progress so that, by the end of Year 9, their attainment is well above average. This progress is maintained in Years 10 and 11, when they obtain well above average GCSE results. The highest attaining students achieve GCSE results in three separate sciences, whilst the remainder take the science double award. Work in class and written assignments are often of a very high standard indeed. In Year 9, for example, some very high attaining students produce work which would not be out of place in the sixth form. Students, whose attainment is very low when they come into the school, produce work which is much better than their results in national tests in Year 6 would predict. This is especially evident in their ability to interpret experimental data and to evaluate the results.
76. In Year 11, results are well above the national average. The number gaining the highest grade, A\* in physics in 2002, for example, was nearly twice the national average. However, the number gaining the highest grades, A\* and A in the double award GCSE, does not always reflect the very high standards reached in the classroom and, especially, in investigative assignments. The school has already taken action to improve this situation. In lessons,

teachers bring out the very best in students of all abilities. This was seen, for example, in two superb discussions, led by different teachers, and with students of very different prior attainment, about the implications and moral issues surrounding the potential availability of personal genetic information for individuals. Teachers are successful in helping students of all levels of prior attainment, including those who have special educational needs, to make very good progress in relation to their potential. Achievement throughout the school is, therefore, very good.

77. The quality of teaching is very good overall, and no unsatisfactory teaching was seen. Half the lessons were very good or better and a quarter were excellent. One of these excellent lessons consisted mainly of a quite outstanding discussion about genetically transmitted diseases. These very good lessons are characterised by clear learning objectives shared with students, activities which fire their imagination and excellent relationships and classroom management. The atmosphere for learning, which teachers create, is often outstanding, and students respond by investing a high level of interest and commitment and participating well.
78. In lessons which were satisfactory, rather than good, learning objectives were not as clear and, as a result, students became less focused on their work and learning suffered. In a few lessons, there was insufficient variety in what students were asked to do and, although the lesson started well, students became restive and concentration deteriorated.
79. Leadership and management of the department are excellent. Management of the department is based on a structure in which four heads of subject, who are all experts in their field, are led by an overall head of science. The head of science has an excellent vision for the department and has created a team of teachers who work very well together to realise that vision. At its centre is the need to create a sense of wonder at the diversity of the natural world, and to make learning science a stimulating and exciting experience for students of all abilities whilst supporting them in gaining the best possible results in tests and examinations. Monitoring of the department is very good.
80. All teachers contribute to a policy of continuous improvement and development. All members of the department are kept up to date by attending suitable courses.
81. Resources are good overall. Laboratories are very well maintained and there is excellent technical support for teachers. However, in a growing school, all specialist accommodation is used to capacity. There is good access to computers and students make good use of them. Teachers make good use of data projectors in classrooms.
82. At the time of the last inspection, the provision in science was very good. Major developments have taken place since that time, including the development of sixth form science teaching into a major strength of the school. The curriculum in Years 7 to 11 has been further developed and examination results have continued to rise. Improvement since the last inspection has, therefore, been very good.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards have improved significantly over the past two years.
- The leadership of the senior management and head of department has shown very good vision, leading to great improvement in the quality of staffing and resources.
- Very good teaching is supported by excellent assessment practices.
- Co-operation between the ICT department and others across the curriculum provides good, coherent use and learning of ICT in most subjects.

- The low amount of time allocated to the short course at GCSE results in a heavy commitment of ICT staff and pupils who have to complete coursework outside lesson times.
- The layout of two classrooms has a detrimental effect on pupils' learning.

### Commentary

83. Standards at GCSE in 2002 were well below average, but since then there has been a very great improvement in the short course GCSE results so that, in 2003, they were close to the national average. Work seen during the inspection is above average in Year 11, confirming the continued rise in standards, even though the most able pupils do not take the subject. Pupils' work shows a good understanding of basic principles but they struggle to complete coursework in very little lesson time. Teachers and pupils work very hard to address this in their own time. Pupils with special educational needs attain well in relation to their ability. Standards at the end of Year 9 are above average, with accurate teacher assessments above average in 2002 and again in 2003. Pupils are familiar with the whole range of the National Curriculum and apply software well to particular situations. Highest attainers have a well-developed sense of what is appropriate to the context and the user, while the majority can apply principles well after discussion. Lower attainers, with help, understand the tasks that they perform and the reasons for doing so.
84. Achievement over the period from Year 7 to Year 9 is good, with pupils learning to think about their use of ICT, so that they have a solid foundation for the principles that they will apply in their GCSE work. Achievement at GCSE over the last year is also good in that more pupils than in previous years have completed tasks in the very short available time, with a high level of independence. This achievement is the result of very good teaching that helps to balance the shortage of teaching time. Teachers make sure that pupils understand where the lesson sits in the course and what they are aiming to learn by the end. They set tasks that require them to think rather than simply to learn. Teachers analyse results and act on their findings to improve their planning. They are flexible in that if a task needs a different approach they will use it. Teachers expect a lot of their pupils, work at a fast pace, show a high level of commitment and are, therefore, well respected. Pupils enjoy ICT lessons; on several occasions they were disappointed when the lesson ended. They learn very well in lessons.
85. Excellent leadership of ICT, within the department and within the school, has had a great impact on the raising of achievement. The head of department analysed accurately the issues that were causing pupils to have unsatisfactory performance, and was very well supported by the senior management in implementing solutions. As a result, the school now has an above average ratio of computers to pupils in a very well managed network, with relevant software, so that pupils can use computers at lunchtimes, after school and in other subjects. All of the teachers are now specialists with excellent subject knowledge. They work very well with learning support assistants to help pupils with learning difficulties. ICT assistants are very helpful in class when pupils have problems with hardware or software. Pupils who do not take GCSE ICT keep a record of their use of ICT to make sure that they cover the requirements of the National Curriculum. However, although the number of computer rooms has increased, there are two rooms in which the barriers between banks of computers prevent teachers from seeing pupils and also prevent some pupils from having a clear view of either teacher or whiteboards.
86. Improvement since the last inspection is, therefore, very good in terms of standards, curriculum coverage, especially at GCSE, specialist teaching and provision of resources.

## Information and communication technology across the curriculum

87. ICT across the curriculum is good, with very good communication between the head of ICT and other subjects within the school so that there is planning for co-ordination of experience and expertise to the advantage of both areas. There is a good contribution to the teaching of ICT in science and design and technology, while ICT is used very well in music, physical education, drama, and well in most other subjects, with the exception of mathematics and religious education. The department makes a good contribution to pupils' education in citizenship, literacy and numeracy.

## HUMANITIES

### Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and experience.
- Fieldwork opportunities are very good and raise achievement.
- Increasing use of new technologies is improving teaching and learning.
- Teachers' expectations are too low in Years 7 to 9 such that pupils are not sufficiently challenged by demanding work and their achievement is unsatisfactory.
- Teaching methods in some lessons do not take enough account of the abilities of different groups of pupils, especially the higher attainers.

#### Commentary

88. Results at GCSE in 2002 were average. In 2002, pupils did as well in geography as in their other subjects. Attainment in 2003 was above average and similar to the average across the school.
89. Standards in lessons up to Year 9 are similar to national expectations. Higher attaining pupils do not achieve high enough standards. On entry, they have already mastered some basic geographical skills and concepts but not enough account is taken of this in teachers' planning. Not enough importance is given to knowing and using specialist geographical vocabulary. Opportunities to develop literacy are sound but there is not a strong enough focus on the geographical content or completeness of pupils' writing. There is an absence of geographical detail and precision in written and oral work. Pupils do not experience a wide enough range of graphical, diagrammatic and map work. Enquiry techniques are well developed, particularly by transport and land-use studies in Ringwood, and study of coastal management at Hengistbury Head. There is not, for most pupils, sufficient improvement between Years 7 and 9, and their achievement is unsatisfactory.
90. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are currently high and pupils are achieving very well. They are achieving a very good basis for GCSE examinations. Explaining urban redevelopment they show good knowledge and understanding of the Hoyt and Burgess models of city growth. They routinely employ geographical language accurately in their explanations. Discussion of social and ethical issues of urban renewal contributes well to citizenship. Coursework on Linford Brook shows good knowledge of river processes. Higher attaining pupils use numeracy skills very effectively to graph river velocity.
91. Teaching and learning are good overall, but are weaker for the lower year groups. The quality of teaching is unsatisfactory in some lessons in Year 7 and Year 9 because there is insufficient new learning and pace of working and expectations are not high enough. Work is too easy; low level tasks and repetition of earlier work limit pupils' achievement. Assessment is good but

marking praises work too readily when standards achieved are not as high as they should be. Higher standards are achieved where pupils have the opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning and can progress quickly without the curb of restricting tasks. In Years 10 and 11, teaching is very good because teachers skillfully explain new concepts without oversimplification. Expectations are high and lessons are conducted using higher level geographical language. Teaching is planned well and pupils are managed firmly. In the best lessons different work on the common topic raises the attainment of both higher and lower attaining pupils. Work is very demanding and raises standards.

92. Management and leadership are satisfactory. Since the previous inspection, relative performance in GCSE examinations has declined. While standards are now improving in Years 10 and 11, there are still issues of underachievement to be tackled in Years 7 to 9.

## History

Provision in history is **very good** with some **excellent features**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievements are very good.
- Pupils' standards of work are very good.
- Teaching is of very good quality. It is confident, energetic and well informed.
- Teachers and pupils share an enthusiasm for the subject.
- Careful planning and assessment ensure that all pupils are fully involved in lessons.
- Excellent use is made of visits, the local community and of ICT.
- The history co-ordinator ensures that history makes a positive contribution to the life of the school.
- Not enough boys achieve the highest grades in GCSE.

## Commentary

93. The achievements of pupils, by the end of Year 9, are very good. According to teacher assessments, three-quarters of pupils achieve above the national expectation for their age and 42 per cent achieve the higher levels. This level of success continues up to Year 11, where significant numbers of pupils achieve the highest grades. Male pupils are, however, under-represented in the highest grades for GCSE. The school is aware of this and is taking action to reduce the gap.
94. The standards reached by pupils currently are also high, and achievement is very good. The emphasis on teaching Year 7 pupils the skills of research and investigation equip them well for future work. The interesting nature of this approach, for example using the skills of evidence to solve a burglary, ensures pupils' interest and involvement. By Year 9, pupils are beginning to understand social and moral issues in history, such as the impact of conscientious objectors in the First World War. Pupils' growing historical vocabulary and background information enable them to apply these skills to historical problems with confidence and enthusiasm.
95. By Year 11, pupils are articulate and confident. This is a consequence of the department's recognition of the relationship between high standards in history with ensuring pupils' high standards in literacy. Reading and writing form a part of every lesson and of homework. Key word lists are provided for all pupils. Well-written projects are complemented by striking and informative wall displays.
96. The standard achieved by lower ability pupils is also very good. The imaginative teaching makes the subject alive and interesting for them. As with other pupils, the use of visits and links with the local community makes history real and challenging. Year 7 pupils' understanding of the Roman army was enhanced by the visit to the school of the Augusta Legion, and Year

11 pupils' understanding of the impact of the First World War was made very clear by their visits to France and Germany.

97. Teaching is very good, and pupils learn very well. The energy of the staff, combined with their enthusiasm for the subject, communicates itself to the pupils with beneficial effect. The confidence of the pupils is a consequence of the respect shown to them by staff. There is a shared sense of enjoyment in the teaching and learning of history. An excellent example of this was a lesson for Year 7 pupils on Ancient Rome. The use of an imaginary 'Tardis' and computer images enabled the pupils to tour the ancient city. The vibrant nature of the excitement and enjoyment of the lesson was clearly evident.

**Example of outstanding practice**

*Context: A year 7 history lesson for lower attaining pupils. The theme of the lesson was a tour of ancient Rome.*

*A stimulating and exciting experience for the pupils, with a stimulating use of computer-generated images and highly effective use of drama.*

*The history came alive and the experience of visiting Rome seemed real. The use of a 'Tardis', as the time machine in which the pupils would travel was an inspired touch. The setting of the controls and acting out the jerkiness of the journey resulted in lots of laughter and a keen anticipation of what they would meet at the other end.*

*The virtual tour of the city created rising excitement as pupils saw the buildings they had been told about, and the atmosphere of the lesson took on even more excitement as pupils recognised the buildings they had discussed in an earlier lesson.*

*The success of this lesson also owed much to the teacher's understanding of her group and the careful way in which materials were matched to their needs. This lesson demonstrated that it is possible to make history real and exciting for even pupils of the lowest ability and can awaken a real desire to learn more.*

98. All of these strengths are a consequence of the excellent management of history. Well-qualified staff work as a team and are very supportive of each other. Planning and organisation are meticulous. Strategies to improve the standard of teaching and the quality of pupils' learning are efficiently implemented. The history department is forward looking and receptive to change. The department is strongly committed to achieving the highest standards for all the pupils in their care.
99. The department has made very good progress since the previous inspection and has fully implemented the recommendations that were made.

## **Religious education**

The provision for religious education is **satisfactory**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Both the classroom environment and staff/pupil relationships positively support learning.
- Moral education and development of the skills of questioning, reflection and evaluation are very good.
- Insufficient time is allowed to deliver the curriculum in Years 10 and 11 for pupils who do not opt to take the GCSE.
- An insufficient range of learning activities is used to motivate pupils and develop skills, such as investigation, interpretation, communication and analysis.
- Assessment fails to identify strengths and weaknesses and areas for development.

## **Commentary**

100. Standards in religious education are satisfactory. At the end of Year 9, pupils are attaining in line with local expectations in all areas, and above in their ability to reflect and evaluate about belief and practice. Those pupils taking examination courses in religious education attain well. The standards of work of pupils who are not working on an examination course in Years 10 and 11 are broadly average. However, because there is insufficient curriculum time to cover the required syllabus content, attainment cannot be raised further and, in this respect, the school fails to meet statutory requirements.
101. Achievement is satisfactory. Pupils entering the school are attaining in line with local expectations and progress is maintained. Pupils question belief and practice coherently and readily reflect upon, and evaluate, the religious belief and practice in the light of their own experience. They discuss issues well. However, skills in investigation and interpretation are much less well developed across all years.
102. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The class environment is firm, but supportive and respectful. In a very good lesson seen, the pace and range of activities promoted pupil involvement and developed thought. However, overall, learning activities are insufficiently varied to promote skills development and effective learning. Tasks often require only low level skills, often based around factual recall rather than developing the essential skills of investigation, interpretation, communication and analysis. Pupils are not encouraged either to work independently or to take responsibility for their learning. There is good support for pupils with learning difficulties, especially in terms of the development of literacy. Progress has been made towards developing an understanding of levels in religious education and sharing this with pupils, however, pupils are not yet given adequate feedback to be able to identify what they need to do to improve and specific targets are not set. Finally, the use of ICT to support learning is not well developed.
103. The leadership and management of religious education are satisfactory. The leadership is cautious but clear and committed. Good responses are made to whole-school initiatives but the leadership is not sufficiently proactive in carrying the department forward. Nevertheless, some very good initiatives are in place, such as the Year 7 trip to Amsterdam in which pupils develop learning about Corrie Ten Boom and Anne Frank. The management of the subject is good, procedures are in place to monitor, but challenge is limited. The religious education course planned for Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory. It meets the requirements of the Hampshire Agreed Syllabus, is coherent, allows for pupil progression and has clear learning objectives. The religious education contribution made to the social education programme is effective, especially in the development of pupils' ability to make moral judgements.
104. Satisfactory progress has been made since the last inspection. Pupils are now taught to ask probing questions and to reflect, but lessons remain narrow in focus. Some progress has also been made in terms of developing assessment as a tool for learning. However, curriculum time for religious education in Years 10 and 11 was also judged too low in the previous report.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

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

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in GCSE are consistently well above average.
  - The quality of some practical outcomes in Years 10 and 11 are outstanding.
  - Strong leadership supports a dedicated team of expert specialists.
  - The use of ICT to support learning is very good.
  - The monitoring of lessons is not conducted formally and this restricts the sharing of good practice between teachers.
  - There is not enough practical support for food technology.
105. GCSE results in 2002 were well above average and continued at the same standard in 2003, with electronics and food technology gaining the highest grades. Over the years, standards have remained consistently high.
106. By the end of Year 9, standards in all areas, except textiles, are above average. This represents good achievement. Pupils of all abilities demonstrate increasingly a good understanding of the design process and exhibit good practical skills when handling a wide range of tools and materials.
107. Standards in the current Year 11 are well above average, and achievement is very good. For example, the presentation of coursework in food technology is outstanding and shows detailed analysis and imaginative design ideas. High level practical skills, supported by computer-aided design (CAD) and computer-aided manufacture (CAM), are enabling some pupils to achieve professional quality finishes in resistant materials. Some graphic designs are stunning.
108. The quality of teaching and learning overall is very good. Where teaching is very good, the teachers are highly organised, set challenging targets and provide the pupils with stimulating activities that enable them to make better progress than expected. For example, in Year 10, the pupils were making designer frames for their mirrors. The teacher challenged them to use their mathematics well and showed them how to work with skill and precision when using the tools. Individual tuition in Years 10 and 11 enabled many pupils to work independently and extend their learning. Good questioning techniques ensure that the pupils are able to think through their own ideas very well. Where teaching was less effective the pace was slow and some pupils were off task. Relationships and mutual respect between the teachers and their pupils are very good.
109. Assessment of pupils' work, especially in Years 10 and 11, is very good. Pupils' work is marked regularly and the grades shared with them, so they know how to improve.
110. The leadership of design and technology is very good. The head of subject has a clear vision for future developments. The team has high aspirations. Very good procedures are in place for monitoring pupils' performance and taking action. There is very good support from the workshop technician.
111. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. The vast majority of issues have been addressed, but more formal monitoring of teaching is still required to allow good practice between teachers to be shared.

## VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

## Art and design

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are higher than in many other subjects and, by Year 11, are significantly above average.
- Teaching is very good and teachers have high expectations.
- Pupils' attitudes are positive and they work hard.
- Resources for ICT in the department are very good.
- The department does not offer sufficient planned opportunities to challenge gifted and talented pupils or to develop pupils' awareness of life in a multicultural society.
- Strategic management and leadership of the department need development.

### Commentary

112. Pupils in Year 9 reach standards that are above average. Given that pupils enter the school with average attainment, they are achieving well. Pupils learn to draw and to use colour, tone and texture successfully in a variety of two- and three-dimensional materials as the result of good and very good teaching. They are encouraged to research and develop their own ideas and to work effectively as individuals and in small groups. Good teaching strategies contribute to the development of literacy skills as pupils are increasingly involved in note taking, annotation and evaluating their work. Homework, linked to class work, is set and marked regularly with comments that help pupils to improve their work. Pupils are unsure of National Curriculum assessment criteria and their attainment levels. They behave very well and most work hard.
113. Overall, pupils in Year 11 are working at levels that are well above the national average, and achieve very well. Results at GCSE, in 2003, show that the previous high standards are being maintained. Pupils have developed very good analytical and evaluative skills. Standards in drawing, painting and three-dimensional media are often very good. As the result of very good teaching, high expectations and very challenging tasks, pupils have successfully developed the ability to organise their own learning. Research is often extensive and leads to highly individualised and inventive learning outcomes. Work is invariably influenced by the styles of contemporary artists and pupils' knowledge and understanding is broad and confident. In their research and experimentation, many pupils demonstrate high levels of presentation. They take pride in their work. Access to ICT within the department is very good. Pupils with special educational needs are integrated well and make good progress. Those who are gifted and talented are not sufficiently challenged or extended. Nurturing these students might have a positive impact on staying-on rates in the sixth form for more able students and better outcomes in Year 13.
114. Teaching and learning are very good overall, and generally very well managed and organised by the individual specialists in the department. Teachers have high expectations of all pupils. ICT, including the department's own website, is used very effectively as a teaching aid in some classes, and as a means of accessing homework tasks and research sites. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are made aware of their predicted grades and of the criteria used to assess their work. Attitudes and working relationships are very good. Teachers have created a very good climate for learning in an extremely attractive suite of specialist rooms. The majority of pupils respond with interest and enthusiasm. They behave very well.
115. Art and design makes a good contribution to pupils' moral and social development, as well as the ethos of the school, through the range of good displays in art rooms and public areas. Lesson plans for all year groups need to focus more specifically on pupils' personal development regarding citizenship and spirituality, and to develop pupils' awareness of cultural diversity in modern Britain. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

Strategic management and leadership, focused on creating a more corporate, efficient and systematic approach to the organisation, administration and system of communication within the department, need much greater emphasis and development to enable the department to make further progress. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## **Music**

Provision in music is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The profile of music within the school has greatly increased.
- There are considerably more pupils now taking examination courses, particularly at GCSE.
- Music teachers work very effectively as a team and are of a high calibre.
- The subject is very well led and managed by a new head of department.
- There is an excellent range of high quality curricular and extra-curricular enrichment opportunities.
- Curriculum time in Years 7 to 9 is still too short for teachers to develop all the necessary skills of their pupils.
- Some tasks and activities should be made more open-ended so that pupils, particularly the more able, can achieve their full potential.

### **Commentary**

116. Internal teacher assessments for the past two years indicate that attainment at the end of Year 9 is above average, and inspection confirms this. Although GCSE music results in 2002 were below the national average, results in 2003 were exceptionally high at over 90 per cent A\*-C. These students' grades exceeded predictions and, hence, achievement was very good, particularly for boys.
117. There is currently insufficient evidence to assess attainment in music on entry to the school, though the department is developing processes that should address this in future. Work seen during the inspection shows that present standards in Year 9, though still above national expectations, are not quite as high as 2002-3 teacher assessments would suggest. By Year 11, attainment continues to be above national expectations.
118. Pupils are able to identify features of music by ear and use appropriate musical vocabulary to describe these, and most perform accurately a melody line of music such as 'Livin' la Vida Loca' in Year 9, either from memory or from notation. They can produce imaginative compositions in groups, developing their individual lines within a texture of their choosing, as in the 'Soundscape' pieces written in Years 7 and 8. There is a considerable number of more able pupils with instrumental and vocal skills in each year group. These pupils take much of the work to higher levels, though some activities need a more open-ended structure to allow them to do so. Year 10 and 11 students demonstrate a good understanding of the concepts and skills involved in the range of styles and genres within which they work. This understanding enhances their ability to respond to a range of activities verbally or musically, as in a Year 11 lesson where students showed an unusual affinity to Indonesian Gamelan music.
119. Overall, teaching and learning in music lessons are good. Good teaching was characterised by a balance of pupil and teacher talk, a pace that was appropriate to the activity, clear instructions from the teacher supported by demonstration and guidance on how pupils could improve their work, skilful use of resources and an infectious enthusiasm for the subject. Less effective teaching was often related to the constrictions of the 50 minute lessons, there being inadequate time for the development of ongoing skills, such as singing, for developing pupils' thinking and oral skills through more probing discussion or question/answer sessions, or for effective plenary opportunities. Some tasks and activities are not open-ended enough to allow

pupils, particularly the more able, to achieve their full potential. In an exemplary Year 11 lesson, the teacher used his considerable knowledge and enthusiasm, supported by the ingenious use of acoustic and ICT resources, to create a magical atmosphere that inspired his students to produce a high standard of work.

120. Leadership and management in music are very good. The profile of the subject has increased greatly since the arrival of the new head of department last year. Standards are rising and subject popularity is growing rapidly. The head of department is developing effective systems to support the department's smooth running and to enhance teaching and learning throughout the music curriculum. He has created a strong team, which has good working relationships.
121. Accommodation in music is currently unsatisfactory. As music exam courses have burgeoned, the number and size of rooms has become inadequate and quality of teaching and learning are suffering as a result. This should be addressed when the new building is opened next year. The development of ICT in music has been rapid, and is proving very effective in enriching pupils' experiences and generally enhancing their learning. The music team's commitment to this development, and the school's support for it, are already beginning to show the benefits. It is a real strength in the subject. The expertise of a dedicated team of visiting instrumental tutors makes a strong contribution to the raising of standards in music and to widening pupils' opportunities still further. There is an excellent range of musical extra-curricular enrichment opportunities that truly enhance the school's ethos. A very high standard of performance was seen at the Language College reception evening and in rehearsals for the production of 'Les Misérables'.
122. Improvement since the last inspection is good as standards have risen and previous issues have mostly been addressed, but time for the music curriculum remains below average in Years 7 to 9.

## **Drama**

Provision in drama is **good**.

### **Major strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers use very good knowledge of their subject and very good teaching techniques so pupils achieve very well at GCSE.
  - Good relationships and class management mean that pupils are engaged and enthusiastic in lessons.
  - Very good extra-curricular opportunities enrich the curriculum for a large number of pupils.
  - Curriculum arrangements in Years 7 to 9 limit pupils' experience and training in drama skills.
123. Pupils' achievement in drama in Years 7 to 9 is broadly in line with expectations for their age. Curriculum and timetable arrangements restrict their contact with drama experiences and limit the progress that they make over their first three years in the school. This situation has improved but the provision is still less than pupils encounter in many schools. Pupils learn a range of drama skills from a well-planned range of activities, and achievement is broadly satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Drama is a popular option in Years 10 and 11. Pupils achieve very well so that attainment at GCSE is well above the national figure with 88 per cent achieving grades A\*-C in 2002.
  124. A small sample of three lessons was observed in which the teaching and learning were satisfactory in one and good or very good in the others. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Expectations of behaviour and achievement are high and most pupils respond very positively to the challenges made upon them. In Years 7 to 9, drama makes a very significant contribution to the social education of pupils. Teaching and learning are stronger in Years 10 and 11. A well-planned lesson included a significantly wider range of challenging activities. GCSE lessons are characterised by mature and open responses from pupils who trust the

teacher, work maturely with one another and demonstrate admirable integrity in their ability to be self-critical. Skills of voice and movement, the interpretation of character and the understanding of the structure of scenes were good in the Year 11 lesson observed. Drama gains by being closely associated with music and dance in the performing arts faculty. Extra-curricular opportunities are very good with drama clubs and a technical club where pupils learn about sound, lighting and design. There is a major school production each year for a large numbers of pupils in a variety of levels of involvement. Theatre visits are organised. Local productions are also seen and the department has good relationship with the Ringwood Musical and Dramatic Society

125. The leadership of the department is very good. Schemes of work are well planned and allow pupils of different abilities to enjoy drama, to learn valuable skills and to develop their personal expression. The team of three teachers is accomplished and experienced and the daily management of the subject is good. The curriculum is very well managed at GCSE and pupils are well prepared for examinations. The drama curriculum makes an important contribution to pupils' personal and social education through the topics investigated and through the requirement to work together and to evaluate what groups and individuals have achieved. Accommodation is good. Resources are used well, especially video recording, which allows pupils to analyse their work in progress.
126. At the time of the last inspection drama was taught as part of the English curriculum. It is now a subject in its own right and part of the Performing Arts Faculty. The subject has made good progress since the last inspection and continues to develop strongly.

## Physical education

Provision in physical education is **very good** with some excellent features.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department is very well led by an inspirational, experienced and proactive head of department.
- Teaching and learning are very good, especially in teachers' planning and use of time.
- A very flexible curriculum is provided that meets the needs of the pupils.
- Some inspirational teaching needs to be shown to less experienced members of staff as a tool for professional development and to support performance management.

## Commentary

127. By the end of Year 9, standards are above national expectations. At the end of Year 11, standards on the GCSE course are well above average. 2003 GCSE results were strong, with higher grades showing exceptional performance. In Years 10 and 11, in the core physical education for all pupils, standards are broadly average. Standards in extra-curricular opportunities vary by activity but high standards are reached in a number of areas of performance, including rugby and swimming.
128. Attainment on entry in Year 7 is below expectation. Pupils make good progress and achieve well during Years 7 to 9. Those who choose to take examinations in Years 10 and 11 make very good progress, reaching standards that are well above average, showing achievement that is very good. There is no obvious difference in respect of participation or achievement between boys and girls.
129. Teaching and learning are very good. All teaching staff have very good subject knowledge, lessons are planned well and assessment is moderated. In Years 7 to 9, teaching is good. Pupils are taught a varied and challenging curriculum where teachers show innovative approaches to skill development. In core lessons, in Years 10 and 11, teachers provide

challenging tasks that allow pupils to channel energies into their skills development. Throughout the GCSE course, teaching is very good with some excellent features. Pupils work hard and are very productive in all aspects of coursework requirements.

130. The head of department provides very good leadership and is ably supported by lead teachers for examination courses. There is a cohesive and effective team which inspires and motivates pupils and has a positive effect on pupils' learning. Some inspirational teaching needs to be disseminated more to less experienced members of staff as a tool for professional development and to support performance management.
131. The resources available to the department are managed well and support the development of the subject. The National Curriculum delivery and coverage for Years 7 to 9 is very thorough and is proving effective in raising standards and preparing pupils for their next stage of learning. Good use is made of visiting coaches in both curriculum time and extra-curricular opportunities.
132. Very good improvement has been made since the last inspection and these areas have had an impact on pupils' achievement. The department has been awarded and re-awarded the Sports Mark and has introduced Community Sports Leader Award and Junior Sports Leader Award schemes within the curriculum. A well-managed system of monitoring and evaluation of lessons helps to identify good practice and areas for further development for staff.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

### **Health and social care**

Although the subject had only been in operation for a few weeks at the school, the overall quality of provision in health and social care is judged **very good**.

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

- Students are well motivated by their experiences with health and social care employers.
  - Effective work is produced as a result of students' visits to employers in the sector.
  - Teaching in the subject skilfully uses students' vocational experiences to help them recognise the ways in which the practices they have seen link to textbook theory.
  - The course is part of a well-developed programme which is well designed to meet the needs of its students.
  - There is a very good balance of skills on the team of teachers who deliver the whole programme.
  - Only girls take the course at present; the school needs to consider ways of countering any gender barriers which might prevent boys from taking advantage of the course.
133. The course lies at the heart of a vocational package designed to offer a selected group of pupils preparation for work and life after school, and to raise their levels of motivation and achievement. A child development certificate, a key skills qualification in communication, a single science qualification and other helpful certification are offered as part of the package.
  134. Pupils are achieving very well in the subject so far, given their low prior attainment. They have produced some good careers brochures and children's books, based on information they have obtained from many sources, including visits to workplaces. Literacy standards are low for many of the pupils, though, and constrain the quality of outcomes, but these weaknesses are overcome to some extent by good use of computers for wordprocessing and for presentations.
  135. Teaching is very good, and pupils learn very well. In an excellent lesson seen, students were highly motivated after their time in the nursery, and worked hard to produce children's books of which they were proud. Teachers worked skilfully with individual students to develop their communication and planning skills. Teaching is less effective when pupils are required to

absorb large amounts of information without enough resources to reinforce the key points for them.

136. The course is very well led and managed. It is part of a very well designed programme which uses the skills of its team of teachers very well. There is good vocational assessment experience within the teaching team. The pupils selected for the course this year are all girls; some boys may benefit from this vocational experience in the future and the school needs to ensure that they have sufficient opportunity to do so.

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

The school provides an effective programme of personal, social and health education, which is often taught exceptionally well. Pupils learn through a variety of appropriate activities and carefully structured discussion about personal safety, alcohol and drug misuse, sex and relationships, and are also given good opportunities to consider their career options.

### **Citizenship**

The provision for citizenship is **very good**.

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

- Citizenship has a strong place in the curriculum with significant input from key departments.
  - Citizenship days, when the normal timetable is collapsed and pupils participate in citizenship activities, provide excellent learning experiences.
  - A considerable number of enrichment activities support the development of citizenship in pupils.
  - The monitoring of the delivery of citizenship in other subjects is insufficiently developed.
  - Pupils are not always aware that they are studying elements of the citizenship curriculum through other subject areas.
  - There is scope for further development of pupils' understanding of Britain as a multicultural community.
137. Pupils at Ringwood School are generally very effective citizens, both in the school and in the wider community. Their attainment exceeds national expectations, both at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11, and they achieve well across all years. Pupils are aware of their rights and responsibilities in a very active sense and of the benefits of being a good citizen. They are sensitive to the effect of their actions on the environment and on other people. A very high proportion of pupils develops skills of participation in groups, clubs and the wider community at Ringwood to a high degree. Pupils, however, are not fully prepared for life in a multicultural society.
138. Teaching and learning in citizenship are very good. The discrete citizenship programme in Year 7 provides an excellent opportunity to develop a core of knowledge. This is skilfully developed in Years 8 to 11 through citizenship units delivered across the curriculum and in specific citizenship days. Pupils are taught to discuss and debate effectively. The Newsletter 'Ringwood Young Citizen' reports on all of these, school trips and carries analysis by both staff and pupils on current topical issues. Citizenship days are supplemented by other themed days, assemblies which from time to time address a citizenship theme, and a very broad selection of extra-curricular activities in which citizenship is promoted. An active and effective school council is both democratic and responsible. The school is currently developing the assessment of citizenship that will involve reference to the citizenship logs that pupils maintain and also include formal assessment of the knowledge component.
139. Citizenship has been introduced since the last inspection in which respect for the improvement is very good. The leadership of this curriculum area is very effective. A strong vision is articulated and considerable effort is expended in working with departments to identify how

they can best contribute to the citizenship curriculum. There are strong contributions from history, religious education, drama, geography, modern foreign languages and ICT. Not all departments yet, however, are fully involved; no citizenship work is found in design and technology. Citizenship is managed very well. Plans are negotiated, detailed and available to others. The curriculum is well covered and enriched by the number of extra curricular opportunities available. At present, too little is done to monitor the teaching of citizenship in order to bring about improvement. Equally, pupil uptake of these opportunities is not monitored which makes it impossible to ensure that every pupil is benefiting to a satisfactory degree.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002. Some performance information is not available because the small numbers of students from the school taking the course do not permit valid statistical comparisons.

### ***Level 3 GCE AS level courses (this table refers only to results of those AS students who did not continue their course through to A2 level)***

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English literature	9	100	94.4	33.3	37.9	36.7	38.9
French	6	83.3	85.4	16.7	35.2	30	34.9
Mathematics	14	92.9	74.2	50	34.3	38.6	31.3
Psychology	12	83.3	83.2	16.7	32.5	28.3	33.6
Art and design	10	80	90	40	42.7	34	39
Business studies	9	100	89.1	55.6	31.7	43.3	35.4

### ***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
English literature	25	100	98.5	28	43.7	80	84.3
French	7	100	96.2	71.4	46.1	94.3	83
Mathematics	26	100	93.3	50	52.2	93.1	84.7
Biology	18	100	91.6	66.7	36.3	93.3	74.1
Psychology	32	100	94.3	34.4	38.9	80.6	77.7
Product design	14	100	95.3	35.7	35.5	85.7	76.5
Art and design	11	100	96.1	45.5	48.7	90.9	85.1
Business studies	18	100	96.4	33.3	32.8	77.8	76.5
Leisure and recreation (VCE)	5	100	85.6	0	9.8	48	55.1

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English and French were the focus subjects, but German was also sampled. German is taken by a small number of students and results in GCE A-level in 2002 were average and have improved in 2003. Teaching seen in Year 13 was to a single candidate, and the quality of teaching seen was very good, offering the student a valuable opportunity of intensive oral interaction by a highly knowledgeable teacher.

### English

Provision in English is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Marking and assessment are good and help students to succeed.
- There is a good level of help offered to lower attainers.
- The department has improved the attainment of boys.
- The provision of enrichment activities is limited, particularly for the most able students.

### Commentary

140. In the GCSE A-level examination in 2002, students' performance reached the national average. All students who took the examination gained a pass grade, although the proportion gaining the highest grades, A and B, was below average. Girls did better than boys. This year, results are similar, but boys' performance has improved. All students completed the course. All students reached their targets, or exceeded them, some by a considerable margin. A few with modest GCSE results did particularly well, and it is a strength of the department that the school provides so well for these students. Achievement is, therefore, good overall. The standard of work of current students in Year 13 is broadly average, and encompasses a wide range of attainment, including some which is very high.
141. Students in Year 12 are only a little way into their course, but are already doing better than expected. They engage with the text and all are capable of the close reading necessary for successful literary criticism. Already, students support a range of ideas accurately in their writing, which shows an attention to style and, at its best, precision and sophistication. There is scope, however, for further development of critical analysis. This is already being well addressed.
142. Teaching is good overall and at times very good. Students learn enthusiastically in response to the impressive level of knowledge offered to them. In the best lessons, explanation compels students' interest, and provision for active learning sustains it. Effective connections were made in one lesson between E M Forster's 'A Room with a View' with his literary theory, so deepening and extending students' appreciation of the text. In another lesson, students were enabled to more fully understand the nature of symbolism as they tracked images through the chapters of 'To the Lighthouse' and were able to see how use of the technique illuminated the characters under consideration. Assessment of students' work is conscientiously undertaken and leaves students in no doubt as to what they must do to obtain their target grades.
143. Learning is good because students collaborate well to refine and extend their ideas. They annotate well, taking effective notes. They draft their writing well using wordprocessing. Students are capable of a good standard of independent learning. Provision for supervised independent reading and writing, on the theme of 'War', has served effectively to raise the attainment of boys.

144. The subject is well led and managed. There has been a satisfactory level of improvement since the last inspection. The newly appointed head of department has already begun to raise standards by more specifically targeting examination requirements, modelling answers and assessing work more helpfully and accurately in relation to the criteria of the examination.
145. Since the last inspection, there has been satisfactory improvement. After a period of expansion, new staff have been welded into an effective team and learning materials have been improved significantly. There has been, however, a decision to discontinue some enrichment activities due to changed examination requirements. A-level results have not yet improved since the last inspection.

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

146. Good literacy and communication skills support students' learning in the sixth form. Students are confident and articulate in discussions within lessons and in the many activities in which they participate. Lessons in the sixth form, for example in English, drama and history, contained discussions in which students demonstrated speaking and listening skills of a high order. Students write very well for a range of purposes. In A-level biology classes, Year 12 and Year 13 students were observed writing new technical language into vocabulary notebooks. In business studies, students develop strong skills in the use of analytical and evaluative language which serves to raise standards considerably. Research skills are a strength in many subjects.

### **French**

Provision in French is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good and enables students to achieve very well.
- GCE A-level standards were above average in 2002 and have improved further in 2003.
- Relationships between teachers and students are excellent.
- There is very good teamwork by teachers and very good leadership by the head of department.
- The approach to topics is not always sufficiently well structured to develop students' oral fluency and discussion skills.
- The ends of lessons are not used effectively to evaluate what has been learnt and used to set short-term targets.

### **Commentary**

147. The GCE A-level examination results in 2002 were broadly above average with those in 2003 improving, especially in the number of students gaining A and B grades. Over the last three years, results have improved year-on-year. Very few students opt to discontinue their study of French and the number continuing has been growing steadily with the current cohort for AS-level totalling 30 students.
148. Current standards are above average and Year 13 students are achieving very well in relation to their GCSE and AS results. In the lessons seen, the good, and sometimes very good, teaching is enabling students to extend their learning through effectively planned work which challenges the students to think, use their previous learning and well-developed knowledge of grammar to interpret and get to the sub text of, for instance, the verses of song about the environment. Evidence from their written work also shows very good achievement. This is reflected in the effort which students apply to their research and the care they take in reviewing assessed work. The majority express clear views and are able to marshal arguments in a range of topics. The majority speaks with a fair degree of fluency. However, for a minority, pronunciation still has anglicised features.

149. The standards of work in Year 12 are also above average and the majority of students are making good progress. This is largely because the teaching is challenging and sets them high expectations. The majority achieves well in listening and comprehension and, for the most part, in speaking. The students' positive attitudes and response to using the target language, even when they sometimes lack the required vocabulary, contribute to the progress they make. The method often adopted by teachers to engage students in paired brainstorming often results in good oral responses to questioning and supports the students who feel less confident in speaking within a larger group.
150. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Authentic resources which reflect different aspects of culture are effectively used to stimulate discussion and provide opportunities for students to express their opinions and question each other. Clear ground rules are established for using French and students respond well in their attempts to sustain its use, both in communicating with the teacher and with each other. There is an appropriate emphasis on the teaching of grammar especially in the light of the demand of examinations and this is helping the students consolidate their learning and mastery of tenses and more complex structures. Teachers set high expectations with quite complex uses of language being introduced early in the course. Homework forms an effective part of learning and is used regularly to consolidate and extend independent research. However, students could receive more guidance when discussing new texts or topics with complex themes and language to make sure they have rehearsed the key vocabulary and structures, before demands are made on them to brainstorm and discuss ideas with peers.
151. Supported by well-qualified and committed staff, leadership and management are very good. Teachers work as a team and professional discussions help raise standards. The department has invested well in the employment of French assistants who make a valuable contribution to students' learning. All students enjoy opportunities of visiting France and often combine this with work experience. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

## **MATHEMATICS**

While mathematics was the focus for the inspection, further mathematics was sampled. A few students each year take the further mathematics AS or A-level examinations and results are excellent. The department provides extremely well for these students.

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are well above average and students make very good progress.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and provide outstanding support to their students in lessons and outside of lessons.
- Students appreciate greatly the quality of teaching provided and feel secure in the knowledge that they will achieve their best.
- Leadership and management of post-16 mathematics are excellent.
- In some lessons, students are not required often enough to explain fully their own suggestions or approaches to solving the problems presented.

152. This is a very successful area of the school's work.
153. A-level examination results in 2002 were above the national average. Results at AS-level in 2002 were well above the national average. In 2002, and in previous years, boys performed better than girls overall but, in 2003, this difference was eliminated and girls' performance rose. Retention rates are high.
154. Achievement for most students is very good because such care is taken, both by the teachers and students themselves, to ensure that the course content is fully understood. The

thoroughness with which students' work is kept under review and the extra help students are given whenever it is required, contribute greatly to the successes in mathematics.

155. Teaching and learning are very good overall, never less than satisfactory, and include some excellent practice. In the outstanding lessons seen, for example on transforming sine and cosine graphs and on particles moving under a variable force, students were constantly challenged to think mathematically because the teachers use high order questioning skills. Very good use is made of ICT, such as in the lesson on the Binomial and Poisson distributions and in graph transformation. In virtually all lessons, teachers show immense skill in determining exactly where students have a problem and then guiding them securely through it. In a few lessons, topics are presented soundly but primarily as information to be received or skills to be applied when an alternative approach might also have given students the chance to develop their investigative and reasoning skills.
156. The post-16 AS and A-level mathematics curriculum is excellent because students have so many possible pathways of study and because the teachers make themselves available to adjust lessons to meet students' specific needs. Because some pupils take AS modules in Year 11, having taken GCSE a year early, they have increased flexibility in terms of courses of study and some take A-level in Year 12. Staffing is excellent and resources are very good.
157. The leadership and management of post-16 mathematics are excellent. Outstanding organisation ensures that teachers and students are extremely well prepared and that procedures, in terms of monitoring all aspects of performance, are carried out. Teachers are thoroughly briefed and supported and encouraged to develop constantly their skills for the benefit of the students. Careful analysis of test and examination outcomes identifies any shortcomings and, as in the case of improving girls' performance, actions are taken to adjust provision as necessary.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

158. Students' competence in mathematics is sufficiently well developed for them to manage tasks in all A-level subjects that require skills, such as computation, estimation, graphical interpretation, algebraic manipulation and logical reasoning. These skills were seen being applied well in science, accounting, business and psychology, for example. Good numeracy supports learning in the sixth form.

## **SCIENCE**

Biology was the focus subject for this inspection and chemistry and physics were sampled. One excellent lesson in A-level chemistry was seen. In this lesson, the teacher's outstanding subject knowledge led to a superb exposition on a very difficult topic. Students enjoy the subject, finding it both challenging and interesting, and clearly make very good progress. Most students who take the subject in AS-level in Year 12 continue on to A-level in Year 13. Chemistry results have been well above average.

In physics, A-level results in 2002 were well above average. In a smaller group this summer, two students achieved the highest grade and all passed. AS results in 2002 were good and almost all students achieved grades A or B this summer. Initiatives to increase numbers choosing the subject are being planned. Excellent facets of teaching were seen to lead to excellent features of learning in a Year 13 lesson about fundamental particles. The happy atmosphere created by students and their teacher greatly influenced learning. It underpinned a situation where argument about complex physical phenomena flourished, because it was expected and nurtured.

### **Biology**

Provision in biology is **very good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well.
- Students have a strong drive to learn. Their attitudes are very good, and their thorough organisation of work is praiseworthy.
- Enthusiastic trialling by teachers of a national project has noticeably influenced rising standards. Written materials have received academic acclaim.
- High quality comments on class work are substantially helpful to students in their learning.
- Classroom observations by teachers and managers, which sharply focus upon aspects of teaching that enrich learning, are not regularly done. Good practice needs to be shared.
- Students' creative involvement is too limited in some unimaginative lessons

## Commentary

159. A-level results in 2002 were well above average; half the students achieved grade A and all passed the examination. A significant number achieved grades A and B this summer, although numbers at the highest level were lower than the previous year. Almost all passed. More than half the group achieved grades A and B at AS-level in 2002 and this summer. The introduction and trialling of a national project in advanced biology has noticeably influenced rising standards.
160. Year 13 assessments, so far, show that, in terms of predictions based upon their work and AS results, all are likely to pass the examination with many attaining the higher grades. Overall, they are making very good progress and achieving very well in relation to their GCSE grades. This is due, in no small measure, to their interest and very good attitudes to learning. Keen attention to their teacher's knowledgeable presentation crucially heightened the quality of their learning about the evolution of diversity, thus widening and deepening knowledge of genetics at the same time. Their work shows appropriate progression into advanced ideas; they deal well with photosynthesis at a molecular level. There is scope now for more regular, intellectual debate and challenge of assumptions throughout lessons, to help students clarify explanations.
161. Year 12 students are achieving well; they are moving successfully on from their GCSE work into new areas. Knowledge of the circulatory system has already increased through finer work on the histology of blood vessels. Although their work shows uncertainties in sharply defining hypotheses, it also illustrates a gradual, deeper interrogation of results. The quality of their learning was noticeably enriched as they happily shared the task of observing the effect caffeine had on the heart rate of a daphnia. Competent, practical skills further improved in working with these microscopic water fleas.
162. The presentation of fieldwork records is very good. It is highly organised, methodical and suitably detailed, reflecting a high degree of commitment and diligence from students, thus helping their reflection and standards. During investigations of salt marsh ecology, there is competent use of a variety of statistical methods and of a range of resources, including computers. Support is thorough in helping those who have difficulty in scientifically expressing ideas.
163. Teaching is good overall and, together with the strong motivation of the students, adds to the quality of their learning. The quality of teaching seen ranged from very good to satisfactory. A striking feature is teachers' compelling subject expertise. Teachers and students get on well together, which substantially helped in tackling difficult new work about the effects of blood pressure on activities inside capillaries. They also patiently attend in unstimulating lengthy sessions with too much 'teacher-talk'. Teaching methods are occasionally too narrow, where the teacher has 'centre stage' and opportunities for students to 'visualise' an idea have not been planned. There is scope for more creative involvement of students during some lessons.

164. Marking is constructive, consistent and a strength of teaching. It gives students clear indications about how well they are progressing and, in encouraging further progress, gives cause for thought.
165. Leadership is very good. The head of department has a clear vision and high expectations for future developments. There is much commitment within a small team towards trialling the project and writing materials. Significant improvements have been made since the last inspection and standards have risen dramatically. Resources have expanded and fieldwork introduced. Management is good. Effective channels of communication, through the creation of a website and a handbook, encourage a good sense of teamwork between teachers and students. Teaching and learning are not monitored regularly through focused classroom observations; meetings to share good practice and findings from trialling are not scheduled.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students' achievement is very good.
- Teaching is very good, with very good planning for students' progression over time.
- There are very good accommodation and resources both for teaching and for private study.
- There are no significant weaknesses in provision in this area.

### **Commentary**

166. Standards attained in the A-level ICT course have been above average over the past two years, both in terms of higher grades and also overall. Students' results are consistently higher than those forecast. Particularly good coursework was seen during the inspection, with students meeting the assessment criteria very well in the analysis and evaluation phases. Where the department has been weaker in the past, particularly in the application of data handling, students are now more familiar with appropriate software. Year 13 students seen during the week have a good understanding of the power of ICT to solve practical problems, and of the importance of security systems. They write relevant, accurate essays. The very few girls in the group perform at similar levels to the boys.
167. Achievement is very good in that students entered the course with a wide range of prior experience from A grade at GCSE to no prior certification, in a year whose GCSE results in ICT were well below average. They work well with teacher guidance to produce good, accurate notes, then independently research, present and explain responses to problems set, showing very good gains in understanding. Higher attaining students work beyond the requirements of the course to broaden their experience, thus providing very good examples for the others.
168. Teaching is very good, with well-qualified teachers working in collaboration so that students have a consistently good opportunity to learn. Teachers are demanding in terms of pace and coverage, and challenge students to impress them with their flair while retaining strict accuracy. They expect high quality notes but give sensitive support to students who struggle for any reason. They mark work with helpful comments for improvement, analyse performance and adjust their planning to meet the students' needs. Teachers take real interest in the general use of ICT when they encourage students to use it in contexts outside lessons. Students enjoy the lessons, responding well to the teachers' confidence in them.
169. Leadership and management of the subject are excellent. Staff have analysed differences in results across different areas of the subject and have planned for improvement of the weaker areas. The head of department, in conjunction with school management, has planned for the provision of very good accommodation and resources to teach the subject to a high standard.

Teachers make good use of electronic means of presentation. The teacher responsible for the A-level course has written detailed lessons that provide a high quality common approach seen in lessons.

170. Improvement since the last inspection is, therefore, very good.

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

171. As a result of experience in Years 10 and 11, the sixth form in general have sufficient capability to apply ICT applications to their work in most subjects, in particular searching the Internet, making presentations, analysing data and using specialist software in art and design, music, design and technology, science and mathematics. They do not follow any key skills course in ICT, but those without a prior qualification are logging experiences to provide them with certification.

## **HUMANITIES**

Psychology was the focus for the inspection, and geography and history were sampled. In geography, standards at the AS examination in 2002 were broadly in line with national averages, but the students concerned did better in geography than in their other subjects. In 2003, results improved with around a third of AS students attaining the higher grades. In A-level examinations in 2002, results were well below national averages and students did less well than in their other subjects. In 2003, all six students attained average grades. Teaching sampled, in three lessons, was very good, with very good subject knowledge, high expectations and very good use of resources.

In history, students' achievements and standards in examinations have been very good. In 2003, nearly half of students achieved grades in the range A and B and 100 per cent in the range A to G. In a Year 13 lesson seen, teaching and learning were very good. As well as a developing a highly effective knowledge of history, a significant feature is the development of transferable study skills. Essay writing, research skills and the development of intellectual curiosity are taught very well.

### **Psychology**

The provision for psychology is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards and achievements are very good and exceed the school's expectations.
- Results are above national averages.
- Teaching is undertaken by specialists.
- There is a good balance of practical and theoretical work.
- Students develop an informed and mature response to the subject.
- A significant number of pupils leave the subject at AS-level.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to attend relevant conferences or to have access to external speakers.
- The range of journals and reference material held in the library is limited.

### **Commentary**

172. Students' results are above national averages at AS and A-level.

173. The standard of work seen, currently, is high and students achieve very well by Year 13. Year 13 students deal confidently with the application of psychological theory to practical situations. For example, students can devise presentations to show their understanding and application of eyewitness theory. They write coherent and critical essays and answers to examination questions which are erudite and well-informed.

174. Year 12 students are achieving well. They demonstrate a secure knowledge of elements of psychological theory. In a discussion on normal and abnormal behaviour, they showed insight and understanding, made more remarkable by the short time they have been studying the subject.
175. The very good teaching of psychology is a consequence of the use of a team of specialist teachers. The use of specialists enables students to develop mature and considered responses to the subject. An emphasis on practical application and discussion in lessons gives students the opportunity to examine and apply a wide range of work.
176. A significant number of students does not continue with the subject after AS-levels. This is not a reflection on the department but rather that students wish to 'bank' the subject to be used in their university applications.
177. Psychology is very well led and managed and this is reflected in both the growing numbers of students taking the course and also the high level of examination success. Although book resources are good and computers are used effectively, there is not a wide enough range of journals and reference materials held in the school library. Similarly, attendance at conferences or using specialist speakers is currently underdeveloped.
178. Psychology was not inspected at the time of the last inspection.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

### **Product design**

Provision in product design is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A-level results are well above average.
- Some students' design ideas are unique and imaginative.
- The quality of teaching is very good. Individual tuition inspires and challenges the students to achieve very well.
- ICT supports learning very well.
- An experienced team of specialist teachers manages students' learning with skill and humour.
- Leadership of the subject is very good.

### **Commentary**

179. In 2003, A-level results were well above the national average and continued at the same standard in 2003. The quality of some of last year's work is of an outstanding standard.
180. Overall, attainment is well above average and students achieve very well. Students' understanding of the design process is very good and a number of students have developed distinctive personal styles. For example, in a Year 13 class, the students were working on the first stages of designs for logos for T-shirts, new shampoo or perfume bottles, drink cans and a game for an autistic adult. Others were testing and evaluating their ideas against market products. In a Year 12 class, students were marking each other's models they had developed for a watch stand display to discover why one design was more successful than another. Each model was unique. They had used a wide range of materials, acrylic, metal, wood and textiles and showed good quality finishing skills. Evidence from folders indicates that the students are making good progress and achieving well in terms of quality and quantity. Some students are highly innovative and are beginning to present their work using a variety of graphical techniques. The use of ICT packages, computer-aided design (CAD) and computer-aided

manufacture (CAM) enables the students to produce professional quality work. Independent learning is very good. They can also work collaboratively very well and are willing to share ideas. Their ability to evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses is very good.

181. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Experienced and knowledgeable teachers manage students' learning with skill and humour. Individual tuition inspires the students to improve their work. This allows more freedom for the more able students to extend their learning, but supports those who find the challenges difficult. Assessment of coursework is thorough. The majority of students responds well to the teachers' criticisms and understand how they can improve.
182. The quality of leadership of the subject is very good. The strong team of specialists works to their strengths to ensure good balance and coverage of the course. They regularly monitor performance of the students together and share good practice. The introduction of PCs into the department, the use of professional quality programs such as Photoshop and Illustrator, the vinyl cutter and the CNC (computer-numerically-controlled) engraver for CAD/CAM has impacted on the quality of the work the students are now producing. This subject was not reported at this level at the last inspection.

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

Art and design and music were the focus subjects, and drama and music technology were sampled. Students' attainment in drama is very good. In 2003, almost all students passed at AS or A-levels at grades A-C. Practical drama skills observed in lessons were of a high level. In all sixth-form lessons seen, the teaching and learning were very good. Teachers have an excellent knowledge of the subject and teach very effectively in well-structured lessons. Expectations are very high so that students respond very well and are totally engaged intellectually and physically. They take an impressive level of responsibility for their own work and progress and they enjoy the challenge and the sense of achievement. Very good use is made of video recordings to enable students to visualise their work and decide on ways to improve standards.

Music technology was also sampled in the sixth form. This is a new course at AS-level taken by Years 12 and 13 students together and it is too soon to assess attainment accurately. The observed lesson demonstrated steady progress at this early stage, but students demonstrated the potential to take advantage of the good teaching and support available and should achieve well. Excellent use is made of a professional sound technician bought in regularly by the school, who team-teaches with the regular staff on occasions. With their support, students were able to understand the technical details of a range of microphones and acoustic recording techniques and use this understanding to make their own sound recordings.

## Art and design

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good and very good teaching; tasks set for students are challenging and interesting.
- Independent learning skills are well developed.
- There are good additional learning opportunities.
- Attitudes are positive and enthusiastic.
- Resources for ICT in the department are very good.
- The department does not offer sufficient planned opportunities to develop students' awareness of life in a multicultural society.

### Commentary

183. Students in Year 13 are working at levels that are broadly in line with national standards. The department has a policy of accepting students who have not always undertaken art and design at GCSE. For students such as these, their results represent good personal achievement. Independent learning skills are well established. Students are very capable of exploring a wide range of solutions to a problem and in experimenting in a wide variety of two- and three-dimensional media, sometimes very extensively. Some manipulate their chosen materials with imagination, inventiveness and confidence. In some cases, personal styles emerge and also strengths in particular media. Thorough preparatory work does not, however, often translate into finished work of a high standard.
184. Frequently, many who are most successful in art and design at GCSE choose not to follow the advanced course, and this adversely affects the dynamism of the group and standards in Year 13.
185. Teaching is good and on occasions very good. Specialist teachers are enthusiastic and have high expectations. Students are all informed of assessment criteria, and regular feedback in a small group encourages improvement. There are some students who lack drive and enthusiasm, and more needs to be done to improve their progress and productivity. More thought could be given to the balance between the development of conceptual art and the continuing development and refinement of more traditional competencies. There is a very good climate for learning with very good access to ICT as a medium for creativity as well as research. Opportunities to visit galleries enrich the course and students' understanding of the varieties of traditional and contemporary art.
186. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Strategic management and leadership needs to focus more consistently and effectively on developing a united team approach to ways of improving standards, and in sharing a clear vision concerning the development of the course. Strategies aimed at attracting more able and talented students to the course and for raising standards need further consideration. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, when standards were below average.

## Music

The overall provision in music in the sixth form is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good committed teaching based on positive, supportive relationships between staff and students.
- Good ICT resources that motivate and facilitate students' work.

- A wide range of high quality extra-curricular activities and events that attract students at this level.
- Some teaching lacks the necessary pace and interactivity to motivate and engage students effectively.
- Accommodation is poor for some lessons and considerably impedes learning.
- The attitudes of some students are negative in certain activities.

## Commentary

187. With very small entry numbers for A2 music in 2002, results cannot be compared meaningfully with the national average; however, these students performed beyond predicted grades and achievement was good. 2003 AS results suggest that attainment is below the national average in the current Year 13 but that achievement is satisfactory. At this early stage in the AS course, some current Year 12 students are finding the leap in challenge from GCSE music wider than they had anticipated; achievement is very variable, therefore, and attainment broadly in line with national expectation. However, given the overall attainment of this group at GCSE last year, there is considerable potential for greater achievement during the coming year. Retention in sixth-form music courses is very good.
188. Students make good use of skills and concepts developed previously, and those with enquiring minds build rapidly on these. Most Year 12 students are able to work out a well-known melody accurately by ear, in a key decided by the teacher, and then apply their understanding of different musical textures to alter that melody accordingly. In discussion, they demonstrate a good understanding of musical structures, such as sonata form, and ask perceptive questions to further their knowledge.
189. In Year 13 there are very specific skills and areas of interest that determine students' attitudes and, when the teaching and learning styles are appropriate to these, progress is good and attainment improves rapidly. After studying an extract from the film score of 'Planet of the Apes', they were able to rapidly apply their knowledge of minimalism and serialism to creating short compositions using appropriate music software. However, although these students are able to work independently, they sometimes lack confidence in their own ability and become rather negative, thus inhibiting their own progress.
190. The overall quality of teaching in the sixth form is good and demonstrates a secure and confident grasp of required subject knowledge. On occasions, teaching lacks the necessary pace and interactivity to motivate and engage students effectively.
191. Accommodation for sixth-form teaching is inappropriate in several lessons where groups are squeezed into practice rooms and sound leakage from surrounding rooms detracts from the music being studied. This should be addressed when the new music accommodation is opened next year. ICT provision is excellent and supports learning well. Music students enjoy a wide range of high quality extra-curricular opportunities and most take full advantage of these to develop their performing skills, whilst giving the school great benefit from their considerable talents. Students receive good guidance from staff, and most respond positively to the subject at all times. The subject is very well led and managed. It was not reported at the last inspection.

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

### **Leisure and recreation**

The provision in leisure and recreation is **good** with some very good features.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students' individual needs are catered for very well through a well-designed curriculum.
- Teachers approach high expectations with sensitivity, yet set challenging targets for outcomes.
- The department must continue to develop partnerships within the local community to extend opportunities for the personal development of students in a wider context.

### **Commentary**

192. Standards are in line with national expectations. Students have achieved a 100 per cent pass rate in VCE results and, in 2003, all passed at a grade D or better. The highest grade attained in the last two years has been a grade B. However, attainment on entry is low for an advanced course and students consistently achieve at least one, if not two, levels above grades predicted on the basis of their GCSE results. Achievement is, therefore, good, and this is reflected in the students' current work. Students have a good subject knowledge, and organise their work and portfolios well. Their key skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are sound, and these help them to analyse information and report on the industry they are studying.
193. Teaching and learning are good with many strong features. Teachers display a thorough knowledge of subject requirements, which provide relevant first-hand experience, including that from different contexts and the world of work. Resources for ICT are used well to provide good opportunities for independent learning, especially coursework elements. Any low expectations students might have based on their prior attainment, are challenged appropriately and students are encouraged to give of their best.
194. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department sets high standards across all aspects of departmental management. She provides a good role model and commitment to professional development that motivates and inspires both staff and students within her care. The course is offered as part of a well-designed vocational programme, including an AS qualification in business studies and sports leadership awards. The department must continue to develop partnerships within the local community to extend opportunities for the personal development of students in a wider context.
195. Leisure and recreation was not covered during the last inspection, however, evidence over recent years shows that attainment across grade boundaries has improved.

## **BUSINESS**

Business studies was inspected in detail, and a very good lesson in accounting was seen in which business studies students were offered support in extending their accounting skills to gain an additional AS qualification. The teacher's subject knowledge was very good, and facilitated very clear explanations of book-keeping procedures more complex than standard accounting analysis found in business studies.

## Business studies

Overall, the quality of provision in business studies is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Exam results have been very strong.
  - Students develop very good skills in applying business theory to the analysis of business behaviour.
  - The subject is very well led and managed to keep standards high.
  - Teachers' expectations of their students are very high, which keep students working hard to improve and organise their work.
  - The quality of teachers' marking and assessment of students' work is excellent.
  - In lessons, teachers sometimes direct learning too much and miss opportunities to allow the students to contribute, explore and investigate through discussion and group activity.
  - Plans to enrich learning through enterprise activities should be implemented to further enhance students' understanding of business constraints.
196. Business studies results at A and AS-level have been strong over time. At A-level between 1998 and 2001, they were mostly well above average. Results were average in 2002 as a result of lower results from girls, but in 2003, they were outstanding. All 28 students passed at D or above; 22 (79 per cent) at grades A and B. AS results in 2003 are also very strong; two-thirds achieved A or B grades, and all passed. AS results in 2002 were also well above average, and students did much better in business than in other subjects in the school. In relation to the students' earlier results at GCSE these results represent very good achievement.
197. Standards now remain high. Folders show that students develop a comprehensive understanding of business theory and principles, and a high level of awareness of the way in which those principles can be applied to analyse and evaluate business behaviour. Students write well in a variety of forms; teaching methods encourage effective note-taking and annotation, and extended writing is evaluative and analytical and addresses questions directly. Numerical skills are sound and support the analysis of business performance.
198. Students achieve very well in business studies, at AS and A-level. They strongly outperform predictions based on their earlier GCSE results. Students start the course without having taken business studies before and make very good progress over time.
199. Teaching and learning are very good. Some of the main strengths of the teaching lie beyond individual lessons. Teachers set individual work for students very regularly and have a very high expectation of the quality that work. Marking and assessment are excellent; they focus on developing students' higher order skills of analysis and evaluation which are so important in examinations, and give very clear indications about how students can improve. Within lessons, teachers make very effective use of written and on-line resources to help students make progress at a quick pace. In some lessons, the quality of questioning of students is particularly effective; it is pitched at an appropriate level of challenge and directed around the class to keep students thinking and alert. However, some lessons are directed too much by the teacher, giving students too little opportunity to develop thinking for themselves and contribute their ideas. Students learning is supported by regular 'clinics' to give additional guidance when necessary. Retention on business courses is very good.
200. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. There is a 'house style' which ensures consistency of approach between teachers to their work. High expectations run across the department and there is a strong commitment to supporting students' progress through marking and guidance outside the class. While there are good links with local businesses to support coursework and some aspects of the curriculum, plans to introduce

Young Enterprise would offer a valuable additional opportunity for students to apply their business experience in a real-life context. Business studies was not reported at this level in the last inspection, but A2 and AS results are much stronger now than the average standards reported in the GNVQ programme which operated at that time. Improvement has, therefore, been very good.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

No subject was inspected in detail in this area, although very good lessons in the sixth form's extensive enrichment programme were seen in Japanese and performing arts. In the sixth form, religious education is satisfactory. Personal development is delivered through a weekly morning slot in which speakers, many of whom are visitors to the school, talk about their faith perspective. This is supplemented by collapsed timetable days during which outside speakers address key religious themes promoting informed discussion amongst students.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

