

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **STROUD HIGH SCHOOL**

Stroud, Gloucestershire

LEA area: Gloucestershire

Unique reference number: 115753

Headteacher: Mrs Jo Grills

Lead inspector: Mrs Sue Kearney

Dates of inspection: 01–05 March 2004

Inspection number: 262642

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar (Selective)
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11–18
Gender of pupils:	Female
Number on roll:	897
School address:	Beards Lane Cainscross Road Stroud Gloucestershire
Postcode:	GL5 4HF
Telephone number:	01453 764 441
Fax number:	01453 756 304
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Jacqui Phillips
Date of previous inspection:	22 May 2000

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Stroud High School is an average-sized secondary school in Gloucestershire that provides education for just under 900 girls aged 11 to 18. The school gained Science Specialist status in September 2003 and holds awards for Investors in People and Schools Achievement. Pupils come from a wide geographical area and join the school from approximately 60 primary schools. The school is a selective grammar and very popular. Very small numbers of pupils join or leave the school in years other than Year 7. As a result of the selective nature of the school, pupils' standards when they enter Year 7 are well above average. The majority of pupils come from advantaged homes and the proportion applying for free school meals is well below average. A very small number of pupils come from ethnic backgrounds. There are a few pupils with special educational needs and the proportion of those who have statements is very low. Attendance is very high, absence without authorisation from the school is almost negligible and exclusions are very rare.

The school has close links with the neighbouring boys' grammar, Marling School. The two schools share a sixth form and some buildings and staff. Downfield Sixth Form is part of the Stroud consortium for sixth form provision. The partnership with Marling School was formed shortly after the last inspection in 2000. The vast majority of students continue their studies at the joint sixth form and course completion rates are very high. There are 435 students in the sixth form and females outnumber males by 254 to 181. It is larger than other sixth forms and is increasing in size. A small proportion of external students join in Year 12. There are nine students with special educational needs. Five students are of minority ethnic origin and all but two have English as a first language. Students are required to achieve an average of five GCSE grades A\*-C before embarking on an A level course. At the end of Year 13 nearly 80 per cent of students continue their education at university.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
18006	Sue Kearney	Lead inspector	English as an additional language
9499	Phiroze Daruwala	Lay inspector	
10308	John Paddick	Team inspector	Mathematics - Sixth Form
8672	Michael Roberts	Team inspector	Politics & government - Sixth Form
15372	Patricia Walker	Team inspector	History – Sixth Form
2183	Peter Thompson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Information and communication technology - Sixth Form
21957	Richard Vaughton	Team inspector	Physical education Special educational needs
31958	Patrick O'Neill	Team inspector	Art and design - Sixth Form
20497	Vernon Williams	Team inspector	History Business education - Sixth Form
3390	Kenneth Thomas	Team inspector	Psychology - Sixth Form
18673	Richard Wilkins	Team inspector	Citizenship Religious education
15407	Muriel Harrison	Team inspector	Geography Geography - Sixth Form
8503	Alf Alfree	Team inspector	Art and design Design and technology
30648	Brian Skelton	Team inspector	English
13122	Stephanie Matthews	Team inspector	English - Sixth Form
31441	Margaret King	Team inspector	Mathematics
24026	Celia Holland	Team inspector	Music
10417	Kevin Lambert	Team inspector	Chemistry - Sixth Form
30922	Peter Thompson	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
3386	Gillian Joyner	Team inspector	Physics - Sixth Form
31159	Clive Simmonds	Team inspector	Science Biology - Sixth Form

The inspection contractor was:

Cambridge Education Associates Limited

Demeter House  
Station Road  
Cambridge  
CB1 2RS

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Stroud High School is a very good school.** Standards are very high in GCSE examinations and the pupils' achievement is very good across the school. The ethos of the school is excellent supported by very good leadership and management. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and pupils have excellent attitudes to their work. The school provides very good value for money.

The schools' main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school has an excellent reputation and parents and pupils express very good opinions about the quality of education it provides.
- The leadership provided by the headteacher is excellent and she is well supported by very effective governors who work hard to overcome challenges such as accommodation and the development of the sixth form.
- Pupils' literacy skills are very high and this enhances their achievement in many subjects.
- Pupils are very well cared for and guidance and support at all levels are very good. This ensures that pupils learn in a secure environment where they feel happy.
- Pupils' personal development is very good which is an important element of their education when academic expectations of them are so high.
- The quality of accommodation is poor. It has a negative impact on learning, creates additional stress for staff and pupils in their day-to-day work, raises concerns about health and safety and detracts from the otherwise excellent ethos of the school.
- The quality of provision in mathematics, particularly in Years 7 to 9, is not as high as in many other subjects.
- Statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship and religious education in the sixth form are not met.

There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Standards at GCSE continue to rise from a very high baseline at a rate equivalent to the national trend. The overall quality of teaching has been maintained. Applications to join the school increase each year. Governors have been strenuous in their efforts to improve buildings and have been successful in some areas. The school has recently been awarded Science Specialist status and in the last year has been acknowledged by Investors in People and the Schools Achievement Awards. The development of the combined sixth form with Marling School has made satisfactory progress.

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

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

### **The achievement of pupils is very good in Years 10 and 11 and good in Years 7 to 9.**

Standards of pupils' work are well above expectations at the end of Year 9 and at the end of Year 11. The achievement of female students in the joint sixth form is good.

Examination results in GCSE over the last three years are in the top five per cent in the country. Standards are well above expectations in all core subjects English, mathematics and science in the current Year 11. In geography and history they are high. The achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is very good in the majority of subjects and good in many of the foundation subjects and in mathematics. All pupils make very good progress although the highest attaining pupils perform less well in a small minority of subjects.

Standards in Years 7 to 9 are not as high as in the examination years in many subjects. This is because pupils enter the school from a wide variety of primary schools where they have had very different experiences, particularly in some of the foundation subjects. Nevertheless they make rapid progress once they have access to specialist teaching and resources and their achievement is good overall. Pupils' achievement in mathematics during this time is satisfactory but is less than in other subjects because of some weaknesses in teaching.

Students in the combined sixth form achieve results that are well above the national average. Female students' achievement is higher than that of male students.

**Pupils' personal qualities, particularly their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very well nurtured.** The school takes great care to ensure that the experience that these very able girls have in school is well balanced between the requirements of their academic courses and the need for them to develop as maturing adults. Pupils' attitudes to work and the wider curriculum are excellent. Behaviour is excellent and the very high levels of attendance ensure that learning is regularly consolidated.

**The school provides very good quality of education** resulting from very good support from the pastoral system, very good teaching in Years 10 to 13 and good teaching in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is better in Years 10 and 11 where the structure of the examination systems and the monitoring of pupils' progress support learning more effectively. There is some unsatisfactory teaching in mathematics and information and communication technology. The curriculum is good with very good opportunities for enrichment. Links with parents and the wider community are very good.

**Leadership and management overall are very good.** The senior team and governors work diligently to ensure the best possible education for pupils. They have earned the respect of staff, pupils and parents. The headteacher is innovative, plays an active role in the local area and in the wider educational scene, and is a very good strategic leader. The management of subjects and the pastoral system is very good.

**Parents and pupils report very high levels of satisfaction with the school.** Pupils express gratitude for the open manner that pervades the school and enables them to be treated as adults.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Further develop the quality of provision in mathematics, particularly in Years 7 to 9, to bring it in line with other subjects.
- Continue to improve the quality of accommodation.

and in the joint sixth form with Marling School:

- Improve the quality of leadership and management of the combined sixth form, Downfield.

Breaches of statutory requirements include:

- The provision of a collective act of daily worship across the school.
- Religious education in the sixth form.

Minor areas for improvement include:

- Collecting assessment data as pupils enter the school, particularly in the foundation subjects. Then use this data to provide regular and rigorous application of targets across all subjects to monitor pupils' progress, particularly in Years 7 to 9 and for higher attaining pupils.



## THE JOINT SIXTH FORM AT DOWNFIELD

The joint sixth form has 435 students. It is larger than other sixth forms and is increasing in size. Provision is enhanced by a consortium partnership with Archway School and Stroud Further Education College.

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**Overall, provision in the sixth form is satisfactory.** The sixth form provides well for its current students through a range of 35 courses leading to AS level and A level. It also provides a positive environment for their personal and social development. Teaching in the sixth form is very good and students learn very effectively as a result. Academic success has contributed to the growing popularity of the sixth form. In 2002 and 2003, the females achieved well in relation to their prior attainment at GCSE but the males gained relatively less value added on their GCSE performance. However, the A level results of both males and females were well above the national average and the gender gap in this sixth form is significantly less than that nationally.

The sixth form is cost-effective. The joint sixth form was not in place at the last inspection. The development of Downfield represents satisfactory improvement in provision.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Standards in examinations that are well above average.
- The very good quality of teaching that supports very good learning.
- The good range of academic courses.
- Students demonstrate maturity in their approach to all aspects of school life and show enthusiasm for their academic work.
- Value added gains are less for males than for females.
- The study accommodation provided for the use of the sixth form students is inadequate.
- Statutory requirements with respect to the provision of religious education and a collective act of worship are not met.
- The leadership of the governors and the two headteachers has been unsatisfactory because they have failed to establish a clear mutual vision and sound working infrastructure for Downfield sixth form.

### 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, but a number of subjects were sampled.*

CURRICULUM AREA	EVALUATION
English	<b>Provision is very good.</b> Standards are very high because students are taught very well. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and make lessons stimulating and challenging. Students are enthusiastic and work hard but the range of activity is sometimes limited by the poor accommodation.
Mathematics	<b>Provision is good.</b> Standards are well above average and rising. Teaching and learning are good and students achieve well.
Biology	<b>Provision is very good.</b> Students achieve very well because of the high quality of teaching in this increasingly popular subject.
Chemistry:	<b>Provision is good.</b> Good teaching leads to satisfactory achievement for the majority of students. Very good attitudes assist students' learning.

Physics	<b>Provision is good.</b> Good teaching characterised by high levels of support leads to standards that are in line with national averages. Students' attitudes are excellent.
Psychology	<b>Provision is very good.</b> Enthusiastic teaching by highly qualified teachers promotes good achievement. Students' very good attitudes contribute significantly to their progress.
Information and communication technology	<b>Provision is satisfactory.</b> Examination results are at the national average and achievement is satisfactory. Standards seen are good overall with male students performing particularly well.
History	<b>Provision is very good.</b> Very good teaching, with a clear emphasis on meeting examination requirements and assessment criteria, promotes well-above average standards and good achievement.
Geography	<b>Provision is good.</b> Female students are achieving well and standards overall are above average. More students are choosing to study the subject and the joint leadership is effective.
Politics & government	<b>Provision is excellent.</b> Very good leadership, teaching and learning have produced excellent standards and student attitudes.
Art and Design	<b>Provision is good.</b> Very good teaching leads to good learning outcomes, except where unclear leadership impacts on achievement.
Business Education	<b>Provision is good.</b> Standards have improved and are now above average because of the good quality of teaching and learning.

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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

Sixth form managers provide a good quality of support and guidance in Years 12 and 13. Information about sixth form courses is good and students are very well prepared for the requirements of AS and A level examinations. The quality of advice offered in preparation for university entry is good. There are very good reporting and review procedures.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the sixth form is unsatisfactory. There has been an historic failure on the part of the governors and two headteachers to establish a mutual vision and effective infrastructure for the combined sixth form. The recently appointed sixth form co-ordinator has suffered from ill health and lacks the remit to provide strategic leadership. Day-to-day administration is effective.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are positive about the sixth form, the range of subjects offered, the quality of teaching and the level of support they receive. The strengths they have identified are justified. They do have concerns about the conflicting advice they sometimes receive resulting from the lack of clarity in the overall leadership and management of the sixth form.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

GCSE examination results in 2003 are above those of other grammar schools and the trend of improvement over recent years is broadly in line with the national trend. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average and the achievement of pupils is very good.

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

- Pupils' literacy skills are very high and this contributes significantly to their high standards in the humanities and English at the end of Year 11.
- Pupils' achievement is very good because of very good teaching and pupils' excellent attitudes to their work.
- Standards in science have improved because of improvements in the quality of teaching and the curriculum.
- In 2003 in the national tests at the end of Year 9 standards in English and mathematics were below the expected level when compared with similar schools.

#### **Commentary**

1. Girls are admitted to the school after taking a selective test based on their verbal reasoning ability. There is almost three times the number of applicants for the number of places as the school has an excellent reputation and competition for places is high. Data held by the school confirms that the average ability of pupils when they start in Year 7 is very high, in the top five per cent in the country. Within any group of pupils there are a small number with verbal reasoning skills measuring over 130 when the national average is 100 and the majority of pupils measure around 120 to 125.
2. These very high skills are built on very successfully in many subjects so that by the time pupils reach the end of Year 11 they are achieving some of the highest GCSE grades in the country. The school recruits from more than 60 different primary schools and draws pupils from a wide geographical area. This means that pupils' experiences in the foundation subjects are very varied and many join the school with average skills. However, the pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 9 in many of these subjects as they experience specialist teaching and resources. This progress is greatly enhanced by their excellent attitudes to work and their very high literacy skills. When all subjects are considered, the attainment of pupils when they enter the school is well above average.
3. Although the achievement of pupils is very good across the school there are pockets of lower performance. The school has been aware of underachievement in the core subjects in the national tests at the end of Year 9 and has identified strategies to combat this. These were seen to be having a very positive impact on the standards in science and some good improvement in English, where pupils' achievement across Years 7 to 9 is good. However, there remains some underachievement in mathematics. This is largely due to weaknesses in teaching.
4. The previous report identified concerns about the rate of progress of those pupils with the highest attainment levels. The school has successfully improved the provision for these pupils in many subjects by having a strong focus on improving teaching and learning and sharing good practice. However, this group of pupils remains a concern in a small minority of subjects.
5. While the literacy skills of pupils are very high, their skills in information and communication technology and mathematical skills are less so. The school has recognised this and the

recent successful application for Specialist Science status is the means by which governors intend to address the issue.

6. There are a very small number of pupils with special educational needs in the school. The achievement of these pupils is good because their progress is monitored very well and teachers are very aware of their needs.
7. The very low proportion of pupils from ethnic backgrounds achieve standards in line with all other pupils and are fully integrated into the activities of the school.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	39.7 (39.5 )	33.4 (33.3 )
mathematics	44.8 (43.4 )	35.4 (34.7 )
science	41.9 (40.4 )	33.6 (33.3 )

*There were 128 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	98.4 (100 )	50 (50 )
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	100 (100 )	91 (91 )
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (100)	96 (96 )
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	53.2 (54.1 )	34.7 (34.7 )

*There were 126 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

**Joint Sixth Form with Marling School**

8. In 2002 and 2003, A level results were well above the national and local education authority averages. 58 per cent of candidates achieved A-B grades in 2003, with female students achieving a higher average point score than males in both years. Nevertheless, the gap is less than that observed nationally, and males exceeded the average for males by a greater margin than that of the females over females nationally. AS results reflect a similar pattern of gender disparity. In comparison with individual prior attainment, there has been evidence of under-achievement in some subjects by males. The school has recognized the situation, and a number of strategies aimed at reversing this pattern are currently being explored. Standards of work observed during the inspection were very good. Students with special educational needs and those for whom English is not the first language achieve and progress in line with their peers. Standards of literacy, numeracy and communication skills are well above national expectations, and the independent use of computers by students is very good.

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

Males only	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	98.0 (99.2)	97.1 (97.1)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	52.9 (47.1)	38.4 (37.6)
Average point score per pupil	298.1	246.3

*There were 66 males in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*



<b>Females only</b>	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	97.8 (98.7)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	63.2 (68.5)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per pupil	312.2	268.7

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

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

Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is excellent and this engenders the outstanding attitudes to learning. Pupils are very proud of their school. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is very good. Attendance is high, and punctuality is good, overall. These features reflect the findings of the previous inspection.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils are keen to participate in extra-curricular activities.
- There is a strong sense of responsibility amongst the pupils for the school and wider community at home and abroad.
- Excellent relationships exist amongst pupils and between pupils and their teachers, and all other adults in the school.
- The school does not make sufficient provision for a daily act of collective worship.
- Pupils need to develop greater awareness of life in multi-cultural and multi-ethnic Britain.

### **Commentary**

- Attendance has remained consistently high over the last three years and pupils maintain good punctuality although there is some lateness in lessons often due to building construction on site. The school is commended for its zero rate of unauthorised absence.

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.1	School data	0.0
National data	7.2	National data	1.1

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

- A very strong trait amongst pupils is the sense of belonging and pride in their school. These positive features are discernible in pupils' generally smart appearance, their politeness to visitors, and their friendliness. Pupils are very articulate and self-assured.
- A strongly academic environment nurtures the real enthusiasm amongst pupils to learn and participate in a range of activities provided. Pupils enjoy coming to the school and feel they are acquiring new skills and knowledge, even though in many areas, accommodation does little to enhance their experience. The school has good strategies in place to ensure that behaviour in the classrooms and around the school continues to be excellent, and it deals with rare cases of bullying swiftly and with sensitivity. The excellent behaviour is a credit to the pupils and school particularly when considered in the context of large class sizes caused by low funding levels, cramped and poorly arranged rooms and poor social facilities.

## Exclusions

### *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	823	3	0

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

### **Joint Sixth Form with Marling School**

12. Students' behaviour and attitudes to school are very good. Attendance is very good and punctuality is good despite problems of inter-departmental transit created by a vast two-school site. Most students value the right to be considered for prefect status. However, there is a significant gender imbalance in favour of females. Male students say they are reluctant to assume prefectorial responsibilities because they prefer to spend as much of the school day as possible on the site of the girls' school where facilities are deemed to be superior.
13. The personal development of students is satisfactory. Students may choose to assume responsibilities and to contribute to the development of the whole school. Enrichment activities such as World Challenge and Young Enterprise attract a good following. However, the range of extra-curricular activities on offer to students is not extensive.
14. In response to a questionnaire, the great majority of students said they would recommend the sixth form. Those students joining the school in Year 12 are provided with good levels of support. Induction arrangements are satisfactory. The school frequently consults students about provision in the sixth form.

### **Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

15. The school provides very good opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
16. The school makes good provision for the spiritual development of its pupils. Assemblies, which are well prepared, thoughtful and reflective, emphasise the importance of respect, religious values and beliefs providing opportunities for pupils to share their feelings, ideals and thoughts. However, the school currently only provides an act of collective worship for pupils in Years 7 to 11 on three occasions each week, and in the sixth form on two occasions. This means the school does not fully meet with statutory requirements.
17. Pupils' very good moral development is founded on their teachers' high expectations for their discipline and demeanour in and around the school. Through a planned programme of personal, social and health education, pupils learn and recognise the values of honesty, integrity, fair play and trust.
18. Pupils grow in confidence and maturity because of the school's very good provision for their social development. Social development and sense of community are augmented through smart school uniform, tutor groups, assemblies and the personal, social and health programme. Pupils are encouraged to develop an understanding and show concern for people in different parts of the world, for example, through talks by visiting speakers, and in lessons on development issues.

19. The provision for cultural development, particularly for the pupils' own culture, is good. Pupils have a good sense of local and national heritage. However, they are less aware of a multi-cultural Britain enriched by cultural, ethnic and religious diversity.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The school provides a very good quality of education that features very good teaching across many subjects, an excellent ethos, high standards and very good personal development of pupils.

#### **Teaching and learning**

The quality of teaching across the school is very good and this combines with excellent attitudes and behaviour of pupils leading to very good learning. Teaching and learning are better in Years 10 and 11, and in the sixth form, than in Years 7 to 9. Pupils achieve very well in Years 10 and 11 and achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good. It is good in the sixth form for female students.

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

- Teachers have high levels of specialist knowledge that enable them to challenge and extend the learning of these very able girls.
- Questioning techniques capitalise on the very high literacy skills of the pupils to prompt further development of knowledge and understanding.
- Baseline data is not yet collected and used to full effect across all subjects and target setting in the lower school has insufficient challenge incorporated into the system.
- There is some unsatisfactory teaching in mathematics and information and communication technology.

#### **Commentary**

20. Outstanding teaching was seen in religious education and geography where teaching takes advantage of the high levels of literacy that pupils have when they first enter the school. This is also a strong feature of the very good teaching seen in English and history. Strategies introduced into Years 7 to 9 have had a significant impact on the structure and pace of lessons in many subjects. This is particularly noticeable in science where the quality of teaching and learning is also very good.
21. In all other subjects the overall quality of teaching and learning is good except in mathematics where it is satisfactory. In information and communication technology the overall grade is good but there are some weaknesses in the teaching in some lessons. The profile of teaching across the school is similar to that at the last inspection.
22. Some of the aspects of teaching that are not so effective generally are the use of time and resources, particularly the use of computers to support pupils' learning, and the use made of homework to extend and consolidate learning. Although the provision in information and communication technology is much improved since the last inspection when it was identified as a key area for development, the number of computers in the school remains below the average. The school has a clear policy to protect pupils from extreme pressure that might be caused by the unusually high expectations of these high performing girls. This policy may need to be reviewed to enable homework to play a more effective role in the maintenance and improvement of standards.
23. The same policy has resulted in a decision to work with targets that do not have a challenge factor incorporated into the calculation. This does not necessarily fit comfortably with maintaining and raising standards or ensuring that pupils continue to achieve at high levels. In addition, many of the foundation subjects do not have sufficient information about pupils' skills as they enter Year 7 and some do not take into consideration the ability of these very able girls to progress rapidly when specialist teaching and resources are at their disposal. Although



assessment systems are good across the school and are used very effectively in some subjects this is an area for development particularly in the lower years.

24. Although there are not many pupils identified as having special educational needs, they all achieve well in all years because learning needs are made known to all staff and they plan provision accordingly. The teaching of these pupils is good in all years, and they make good progress. Individual needs are being increasingly catered for through the use of Individual Education Plans that are distributed to all staff. The school has purchased spellcheckers, and is improving other resources in response to pupils' specific needs. Adults, including the school counsellor, relate well to pupils and have high expectations of response supported by a very caring, concerned approach. Levels of challenge are appropriate and are productive.

#### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 182 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
12 (7 %)	72 (39 %)	69 (38 %)	24 (13 %)	5 (3 %)	0 (0 %)	0 (0 %)

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

#### **Joint Sixth Form with Marling School**

25. The overall standard of teaching and learning in the sixth form is very good. Teachers have high expectations, plan well and set clear objectives for their students. They use their own very good subject expertise to enliven lessons and engage students. Tasks, including homework, are appropriate and enhanced by very good use of resources. Assessment is used effectively and students are well supported in setting individual targets for improvement. Reporting to parents is thorough and includes parents' evenings.
26. In addition to the subjects identified as the focus of the inspection a number of lessons were sampled in other departments. These include design and technology, French, music and religious education. The quality of teaching and learning across these lessons was very good leading to very good standards overall.

#### **The curriculum**

The curriculum is good in all years. There is a good range of academic courses that prepare pupils well for examination success and the next stage of their education. There is equal access to the curriculum for all pupils. The curriculum is a central element in the excellent ethos of the school and the very good extra-curricular learning opportunities are important in pupils' very good personal development.

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

- The curriculum for citizenship is excellent, innovative and well designed.
- The school offers examination courses in French, German and Spanish.
- The curriculum in mathematics, art and information and communication technology is satisfactory but does not cater sufficiently well for the needs of these very able girls.
- The learning environment in many areas is poor

#### **Commentary**

27. The school curriculum satisfies legal requirements for all National Curriculum subjects. It does not comply with the requirements for collective worship or for religious education in the sixth form. In addition there are courses in drama, business studies, Latin and three modern languages. Pupils and their parents report a high level of satisfaction with the courses offered

and the opportunities presented after the age of 16 within the school and the wider sixth form consortium arrangements.

28. The school recruits girls from more than 60 primary schools and this presents difficulties in creating curriculum links between Year 7 and lower years. The recent award of Science Specialist College is already helping to improve the situation with teachers working regularly in some of the primary schools.
29. In English changes to the curriculum are planned to enable pupils to take national tests a year early. This is beginning to show signs of greater challenge in lessons and has addressed the previous underperformance of pupils.
30. The match of teachers to the needs of the curriculum is good overall and excellent in the humanities. All teachers are well qualified but a small number are required to teach outside their area of specialisation and this has a negative impact on learning in one subject. Staffing has improved since the last inspection and the school is recognised by the Investors in People national initiative.
31. Resources are good although the school continues to fall below the national level for the number of computers; this was a concern at the last inspection.
32. Accommodation is poor. The fabric of many buildings including several social areas, toilets and some classrooms is old, tired and occasionally unsafe. Dining arrangements are totally inadequate and result in the majority of pupils eating sandwiches in classrooms. This is unhygienic, leads to a litter problem and does very little to encourage the development of social skills. The school hall provides space for a very wide range of activities, some of which should be in specialist facilities, and the size of the hall constrains the school's policy for a daily act of collective worship. Many classrooms are too small and this has a negative impact on the learning particularly in the large classes in Years 7 to 9. Both staff and pupils have to manage these difficult conditions on a daily basis, making teaching and learning more stressful. The ethos of the school is excellent but this is in spite of the poor environment which does very little to enhance the overall experience of these very able girls and the dedicated staff. The governors have been very pro-active in bringing about improvements but the school suffers from under-investment in the buildings over a number of years and current funding levels that are below that of other schools. This concern was expressed very strongly in the previous inspection report.
33. Although there are only small numbers of pupils with special educational needs the provision is good. However, many parts of the school site are inaccessible to wheelchairs and the accommodation generally presents significant problems of access and safety for any pupils with disabilities such as broken legs or poor sight. The current building programme will alleviate some of the difficulties but is unlikely to raise the overall judgement on accommodation.

#### **Example of outstanding practice**

**Year 8 Citizenship Day** - Pupils made excellent gains in understanding the issues, because their thinking was challenged through an exciting programme of drama workshops, assemblies, group activities and tutorials, drawing on the expertise of a wide range of visitors and teachers.

A scene of apparent chaos met the eye in the junior hall. Magazines, paper, pens, scissors and glue were strewn across the floor, while between, small groups of Year 8 pupils were huddled over sheets of sugar paper, as the air buzzed with excited conversation. But there was no chaos, only purposeful activity, as pupils worked to express in visual form, using contemporary media images, key concepts they had earlier been introduced to in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Resources vanished, as powerful collages and posters rapidly grew to completion. When each group explained to all how their completed work symbolised their chosen aspects of children's rights, a pin could have been heard dropping. The most mature insights were revealed. They left eagerly for the next citizenship session, still discussing their presentations, to the flash of cameras as numbers of pupils photographed the displays.



## **Joint Sixth Form with Marling School**

34. A good range of AS and A level courses are provided jointly with Marling School and the teaching is shared between the schools in each subject. Recent additions to the curriculum include AS levels in critical thinking, law and general studies. The range of vocational courses offered on the joint campus is limited, but through partnership with a wider consortium comprising a comprehensive school and a further education college, vocational courses are also offered. Extra-curricular opportunities are also good, with many students involved in enrichment activities and actively contributing to charity work. Study facilities for students are currently inadequate, but a new building scheduled to open in September 2004 will enhance provision. Staffing and resources in the joint sixth form are good.
35. The school is in breach of statutory curriculum requirements with respect to the provision of religious education in the sixth form. There is no daily act of collective worship, but provision for moral, social and cultural development is good.

## **Care, guidance and support**

The school makes very good provision for pupils' care. Provision for welfare, health and safety is good. Provision for support, guidance and advice is very good and based on very effective monitoring. The school provides good opportunities for pupils to express their views and responds well to their suggestions.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Guidance about work experience, vocational courses, and GCSE and GCE courses is of high quality in Years 10 and 11.
- The school council is very effective in getting pupils' voices heard.
- The school is fully inclusive; it supports pupils from different backgrounds and those with special needs.
- There are systematic monitoring and mentoring strategies for pupils falling behind with their studies.
- Involvement of pupils in the school's work and development is very good.
- Arrangements for monitoring pupils' personal development are very good.

## **Commentary**

36. The school offers very good care to all its pupils. Health and safety arrangements are generally co-ordinated well both within the school and at governor level although there are some concerns about the welfare of all sixth form students taught in accommodation that has some potential risk, particularly on the Marling site. The school has very high expertise in pupils' welfare and child protection. Internet safety is managed very effectively. Inspection of safety and security of the two split-sites, risk assessment, and day-to-day procedures are monitored rigorously as the school is very aware of the potential hazards associated with the poor buildings and complex site. The school is diligent in maintaining the records of accidents.
37. The responses to the pupils' questionnaire indicate that a significant minority of pupils feel that they do not necessarily know to which adults they would turn should they need advice or guidance with personal problems. This view is recognised by the school as it accurately reflects the views of pupils surveyed two years previously. Strategies to overcome this perception include the introduction of peer mentoring and an enhanced role for sixth form counsellors. However, pupils interviewed during the inspection repudiate this claim. They report that teachers are very approachable, and most have confidence to talk to their subject teacher should the problem be an academic one. The tutor system provides very good opportunities for pupils to develop positive, trusting relationships with adults.

38. Pupils are highly valued whatever their background. The school has very good induction arrangements for Year 7 pupils, considering the difficulties associated with recruitment from over 60 different primary schools. Parents are very pleased with these arrangements. The school provides appropriate opportunities to higher attaining girls in the majority of subjects and, although a few parents expressed concern for the development of quieter, less confident girls, the inspection team does not support this view. The school shows a total commitment to the inclusion of pupils of all abilities and cultural backgrounds.
39. There are many ways, in which the school promotes pupils' personal development. The personal, social and health education curriculum makes a positive contribution to personal development and this is monitored well. Most pupils have a good understanding of the subject targets to which they should be aspiring. This results in happy, confident and well-informed pupils. Most consider that teachers treat them fairly and help those who are falling behind with their studies and those who have difficulty in conforming. However, a significant minority of girls express some concerns about this aspect of the school's work in the pupil questionnaire. The inspection team found no evidence to support their concerns.
40. The school seeks pupils' opinions through questionnaires. The school council is pro-active in putting forward pupils' views and suggestions. The headteacher ensures that formal account is taken of their concerns. The leadership of the school is committed to the highest possible standards in all that it does for pupils, in order to enable all to reach their full potential.

### **Joint Sixth Form with Marling School**

41. Good relationships within the sixth form are a significant factor in the quality of pastoral support and guidance students receive. Provision for their care, welfare and health and safety is satisfactory. The support, advice and guidance they receive, based on monitoring, is good. Involvement through seeking and acting on students' views is good, but communication between the schools is not always effective. Many students feel that there is a lack of coherence within the joint sixth form that is reflected in inconsistent policies and procedures, including expectations and sanctions.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

Since the last inspection, the school has maintained very good links with parents and the local community. Links with other schools and colleges are good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents and the local community hold the school in high regard. They are very supportive of the school.
- The school involves and consults parents very well.
- The contribution to learning from the local community is very good.
- Joint work with both primary and secondary schools by two advanced skills teachers is very effective.

### **Commentary**

42. Parents of pupils from all communities and backgrounds have very positive views of the school. As a result, the school is oversubscribed. Through the questionnaires returned, parents express their overwhelming support especially in the areas of teaching, leadership and management and pupils' achievement. They mention very high levels of satisfaction with the support given to their children by teachers and other staff in the school. They are satisfied with the regular information supplied to them on their children's progress.

43. The quality of information provided to parents is very good. The school is pro-active in seeking parental views and ensures prompt follow-up to issues raised. Parents value consultation meetings with teachers, where targets are discussed. Parental attendance at these meetings is high. The Parent Staff Association is supportive of the school and raises funds each year to extend the school's work.
44. The school's links with the community are very good. Local business gave strong support to the school's acquisition of Specialist Science School status. The school has forged good links with the wider community, through exchanges with schools in France, Germany and Spain. The school actively supports the University of Gloucestershire with teacher training. The school choir and instrumentalists regularly perform at local events. Representatives from the school council are active members of the Stroud District Youth council.

### **Joint Sixth Form with Marling School**

45. Parents expressed very positive views about the education their children receive in the sixth form. Communications are very good. Meetings are held regularly and well attended. Parents receive a very good level of information about the progress being made by their children.
46. Good links exist with other sixth forms, especially those in the consortium. However, there is scope to contribute more actively to wider partnerships, especially those involving work-related learning and links with local businesses and universities.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The governors have been proactive in pursuing funding for building improvements to the school and are mostly very aware of the potential risks associated with the current accommodation. They have identified clear and appropriate priorities since the last inspection and overall improvement is very good. All reasonable steps have been taken to ensure the highest quality of provision although there remains some non-compliance with regard to statutory collective worship and the provision for religious education in the sixth form. There are also some concerns about how well health and safety is monitored for students in the sixth form. Governance is therefore very good rather than excellent. The inspection team acknowledge that problems associated with accommodation and the development of the joint sixth form, have taken priority over full compliance with requirements for collective worship. This failure to comply with statutory regulations has had minimal impact on pupils, as standards are high and the ethos of the school is excellent.

Leadership of the headteacher is excellent and the overall management of the school is very good. Support for the headteacher by senior staff is very good. Departmental and pastoral leadership and management are predominantly very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Governors are very supportive of the school and invite presentations from teaching staff to improve their knowledge of school activities. They use their own expertise to contribute to school development, analyse information and question the school leadership. They have a clear commitment to high educational standards within the school and to openness in consultation. School council members are invited to all board meetings.
- The headteacher has a clear vision and high aspirations for the school. She has clear strategies for development and has inspired her team to share their expertise and work together to raise standards.
- Management is very good and has concentrated on school improvements, including monitoring progress and raising standards. Data is collected, analysed and acted on but there is still a need to address some curriculum issues in Years 7 to 9. Financial control is good.

## Commentary

47. Through inspirational leadership and energetic example, the headteacher has the respect of pupils, parents and governors. There is a strong commitment to ongoing improvement and openness in consultation about plans and procedures with all involved in the school. Since she joined the school she is reported by many different sources to have changed the ethos significantly, a fact recognised by the previous inspection. The ethos of the school is excellent and ensures that all pupils are fully integrated into the life of the school. The school is extremely popular. Both parents and pupils express high levels of satisfaction with the very good quality of education provided.
48. Strategic planning is innovative and includes clear provision for the sharing of best practice. Recommended improvements have been made and progress since the last inspection is very good. There is regular analysis of performance data that leads to target setting and efficient monitoring procedures are in place.
49. There are very good systems for the development of staff that are effective in promoting improvements in standards. The deputy headteachers and advanced skills teachers provide very good role models and lead improvements in teaching very effectively.
50. The senior management team of the school has very effective and frequent links with middle managers that both encourage and support shared vision and openness. Middle managers are prompted to undertake more self-evaluation of their departments and become increasingly involved in monitoring the work done in the curriculum and the pastoral system. There is a heavy workload for staff in many areas of the school and additional staff are employed to reduce the administrative burden on teachers.
51. The quality of provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. There is a good awareness by all staff about pupils through the use of Individual Education Plans and other forms of communication. The determination, energy and focus of the co-ordinator provide good leadership and management. The monitoring of strategies used by all staff in their work with pupils is not fully effective and the Individual Education Plans of pupils are not always appropriate. The systems used in identifying pupils with special needs as they join the school are not yet rigorous enough.
52. The school has made a successful bid to become a specialist science school. This has brought benefits to the curriculum and improved funding which is being used to enhance buildings and the resources of the school. Despite some earlier improvements, new buildings are desperately needed to provide adequate and safe space for pupils. Nevertheless, the school provides very good value for money and uses its relatively low amounts of funding efficiently.
53. The main contributors to the success of the school are clearly the people involved in its life. The girls are highly intelligent, mature and responsible young women with a determination to achieve; parents are proud and supportive; the leadership provided by the staff and governors is very focussed and those employed at all levels in the establishment are fully committed to the welfare and success of the pupils.
54. The main challenges facing the school are;
  - The poor state of the buildings and the confused nature of the split site and areas shared with the boys' school.
  - Continued support for mathematics.
  - The development of Downfield, the combined sixth form, which is currently taking a disproportionate amount of effort and time away from main school issues.
  - Ensuring all pupils receive a daily act of collective worship.

- The need to identify and use more rigorously baseline data about the standards of pupils' work in all subjects as they enter the school.

It is the overwhelming view of the inspection team that the school has a very positive capacity to make further improvements and overcome these challenges.

### **Joint Sixth Form with Marling School**

55. The leadership of the governors and headteachers fails to provide a clear mutual vision and a sound infrastructure in respect of the joint sixth form development and is therefore unsatisfactory. Statutory requirements for collective worship and religious education are not met. Although the joint steering group meets regularly and has appropriate terms of reference it has been unable to achieve a consensus on the way forward. The governors are conscious of the issues that separate the headteachers but they have been unable to resolve the tensions between the two schools. Decisions that affect both schools have sometimes been made in a manner that has been detrimental to the spirit of cooperation and mutual trust envisaged at the outset, and this is directly linked to an earlier failure to agree and establish practice, procedures and lines of accountability.
56. Both schools have placed the education of their respective students uppermost in their discussions and the interests of the students have not been damaged to any degree. However, the lack of strategic vision for the sixth form has impacted adversely on staff and is reflected at departmental level. Where departmental management is strongest, teachers from both schools are able to work together co-operatively and share best practice.
57. The sixth form management team made up of the director of sixth form, the heads of year and the sixth form tutors, ensure that daily administrative arrangements, systems and procedures work well. Students are known well individually and benefit from good levels of personal support. Sixth form managers are accessible. The calendar of the sixth form activities is satisfactory in character.
58. Existing strategies for monitoring and evaluating the performance of individual students in the joint sixth form are good. However, there are shortcomings in respect of students taking courses at other schools in the consortium partnership. Overall, the quality of school self-evaluation is good, but the evaluation of outcomes is not yet effective in ensuring the development of the sixth form. In the absence of congruent leadership, the schools lack a clear strategic plan for change and improvement. In terms of the partnership, staff lack clear guidelines for action and there are insufficient calendared opportunities for teachers to meet and for cross-school lesson observation.
59. Funding is used in a cost-effective way to give students a good curriculum and very good quality of teaching. However, there are anomalies in relation to staffing and locus of employer responsibility that need to be resolved.
60. The joint sixth form has maintained the very good quality of teaching and learning and the very good standards of attainment that were reported on previously in the respective inspections of both schools. However, the overall achievement of boys relative to their GCSE attainment has declined over the past three years in contrast to that of the girls.

### **Financial information**

#### ***Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004***

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	£303,242,6	Balance from previous year	109,833
Total expenditure	£311,773,3	Balance carried forward to the next	£24,526



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

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

#### ENGLISH

Provision in English is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' knowledge of their subject is very good and this results in very good teaching and learning.
- Standards in English literature at GCSE are exceptionally high.
- Accommodation remains poor and is affecting the quality of learning.
- There is only limited use of information and communication technology.

#### Commentary

61. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 are very high in comparison with national levels. Results are in line with the average for grammar schools. GCSE English language results in 2003 are very high in comparison with national averages. In English literature at GCSE attainment is exceptionally high and in 2003 nine out of ten pupils attained the top grades of A\* and A. Six girls were in the top five per cent nationally.
62. Standards in English are very high when girls enter the school in Year 7. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory when related to the girls' prior attainment or when compared to schools with similar pupils. In literature, it is good. Achievement is highest among middle and lower attaining students. Changes to courses and entry to national tests a year early are being introduced as ways of accelerating pupils' progress. Achievement is better in Years 10 and 11. Girls make very good progress because very good teaching and assessment helps them to develop the knowledge and the skills needed. Interesting challenges and very effective teaching motivate pupils to work hard and to develop understanding and critical judgements to very mature levels. Analysis of their work at GCSE confirmed outstanding achievement in personal writing and in a wide study of literature.
63. Very good teaching is a strength of the department. In many very good lessons teachers used a range of activities well to maintain pace and challenge. Lesson objectives are clearly explained so pupils understand what they have to do and pupils always work conscientiously. Learning outcomes are not always as clearly expressed. Written work is very well marked in relation to appropriate levels or grades. Assessment and self-assessment are very well used in all years so that pupils understand what they need to do to improve. Information and communication technology is not yet being used sufficiently across the subject, although some teachers have very good skills.
64. The leadership of the subject is very good. The curriculum is good and enriched by good extra-curricular provision. In Years 7 to 9 lesson plans are not always sufficiently challenging for the most able pupils. The day-to-day management of the department is very good. The current accommodation is unsatisfactory and some rooms are poor, but the subject should benefit from the building programme.
65. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

## Language and literacy across the curriculum

66. Whether measured by verbal reasoning or by attainment in national tests, the standards of literacy of girls when they enter the school in Year 7 are very high, putting them in the top 5 per cent of children of their age. Literacy skills are taught effectively in all subject areas and the high achievement of pupils is fundamentally linked to the very high levels of their reading and writing abilities. In their use of language teachers are very good role models, encouraging investigation and self-expression but expecting accurate and well-constructed answers. Question and answer sessions in lessons are brisk and challenging because pupils' language skills are well developed.
67. Pupils demonstrate very good skills in working together, in listening to one another and building on the answers of others when teachers skilfully use follow-up questions. High levels of discussion using technical terms were impressive in many lessons.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The excellent response of pupils enhances their learning significantly.
- The leadership of the subject is good and has been particularly effective in maintaining the quality of provision during recent difficulties with staffing.
- Information and communication technology is not used effectively across the subject.

### Commentary

68. Standards in French, German and Spanish are at or above the national level at the end of Year 9 and well above at the end of Year 11. GCSE results over recent years are consistently high. Staffing and examination board difficulties affected results in Spanish in 2003 and the school has taken positive measures to improve matters. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good for most pupils. National Curriculum levels for expected achievement are provided to every pupil, calculated from their baseline score. However, not all pupils have a clear understanding of the levels or the targets derived from them. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good for most pupils. Each pupil is given a minimum target GCSE grade based on performance at the end of Year 9. "How to improve" sheets in exercise books are used consistently to focus pupils' attention on specific areas of their language work. Coursework feedback sheets and pupil self-evaluation sheets clarify and enhance assessment methods. The quality of much written work is outstanding in both content and presentation, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
69. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Key features of good practice are sound preparation and largely excellent relationships in the classroom, although seating arrangements in some rooms are unhelpful for certain pupils. There are many examples of challenging work to which pupils respond enthusiastically.
70. Although one classroom has a Smart Board that is used to very good effect, there is insufficient access to information and communication technology in the department, and as a result, exciting learning opportunities are not always available to pupils. Accommodation for the department is a drawback in this respect.
71. Leadership and management of the department are good, and despite severe staffing pressure, there is a very positive and supportive atmosphere. Whilst the department handbook is informative and helpful, schemes of work lack some detail. Monitoring within the department is not fully effective. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership has recognised and started to address underachievement in Years 7 to 9.
- Standards are rising, particularly in Years 7 to 9.
- Activities are not sufficiently varied to match the different needs of pupils, particularly those who are the highest attainers.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes to their work and become increasingly self-reliant learners as they progress through the school.
- Feedback to pupils on how they are doing is too infrequent and is related to targets that often lack challenge.

### Commentary

72. Standards on entry to the school are very high. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 are very high when compared with national standards but well below similar schools, especially in the proportion securing higher levels. Results have been improving steadily with 2003 the best results the school has had. GCSE results in 2003 are very high and in line with results for pupils of similar prior attainment. Results have risen slightly over the last three years. Again, relatively few girls secured the highest grades.
73. Standards of work seen are also very high and the proportion of pupils working at the highest levels is increasing throughout the school. However, a few pupils are working at levels below that expected for their ability. Achievement is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11.
74. Teaching is satisfactory overall and good in Years 10 and 11. The decision to accelerate pupils through national schemes for Years 7 to 9 is providing a better challenge than at the time of the last inspection and is addressing the under-achievement in these years. Technical vocabulary is introduced and defined so that pupils write and talk confidently about their mathematics using correct words and phrases. In better lessons, pupils are fully engaged and pace is maintained by change of activities. In less good lessons, work is poorly structured, pace is slow and teachers' explanations confuse rather than clarify. Pupils learn techniques but do not always think about what works and why. In most lessons, activities are common and teachers make little attempt to provide more challenging work for higher attaining girls. Formal assessment systems are relatively underdeveloped, target grades lack challenge and the quality of marking is inconsistent. Assessment is better in Years 10 and 11 when it is linked to examination criteria. Pupils do not always know how well they are doing and how they can improve.
75. Leadership is good. The head of department is a good role model through his own teaching and has very clear priorities for further improvement in the subject. Management is satisfactory. The school has made very good use of performance management and external consultants to monitor and plan for development of teaching. Nevertheless there remains too much unsatisfactory teaching across the subject. Some teachers have other responsibilities elsewhere in the school. This reduces the effectiveness of the actions to improve the quality of teaching. Some of the weaknesses identified at the time of the last inspection are still present. These include insufficient attention to the needs of different pupils, inconsistency of marking, relatively small numbers achieving higher grades and poor accommodation. Building work is in progress to improve the accommodation but this will not completely eliminate the deficiencies, as the older rooms remain small and cramped for large classes. Standards are rising so improvement since the last inspection is good.

## Mathematics across the curriculum

76. Students' mathematical thinking is well applied in their other subjects. In geography, they routinely use complex statistical techniques to compare and interpret different sets of data. They use and interpret graphs and carry out complex calculations to underpin their geographic analyses. In science, pupils use formulae and ratios in mole calculations and work on transformers. In design & technology, pupils' spatial awareness is very good and they collect and present data such as for nutritional analyses. Pupils confidently apply their learning in different situations without having to be reminded or having it explained again. In some subjects, opportunities are missed to use and build on the high levels of mathematical competence that the pupils have. For example, in physical education there is no clear application of the numeracy policy and tasks require only low level skills. The school has completed an audit of use of mathematical techniques, but this is not systematically monitored. The school has no way of knowing if the school policy on the development of numeracy is being applied consistently across subjects.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good achievement leading to improved results at the end of Year 9.
- More work needs to be done on the coursework element of GCSE to raise standards further.
- The assessment of students' progress is very good.
- The teaching is very good.
- The quality of leadership is very good and provides a clear vision.

### Commentary

77. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 are very high compared to national figures and above similar schools based on prior attainment. The proportion of students achieving a level 7 or above increased significantly in 2003 but is still below other grammar schools. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations are very high compared to the national average both in the A\*-C range and in the higher grades of A\* and A. The achievement of pupils is very good across the school.
78. By the end of Year 9, pupils' knowledge of science is well above average. They are very confident when doing practical work and accurately predict outcomes of experiments. Pupils of all prior attainment construct word equations, and extension work for pupils gifted in science has enabled them to construct balanced chemical equations. They have an excellent command of scientific vocabulary and use it in an appropriate context. This reflects the way the department has focused on the skill of scientific writing. By the end of Year 11, pupils' practical skills have become very sophisticated. They collate and tabulate results very effectively and often redraft work to eliminate errors. However, they are much less successful at analysing results and evaluating conclusions which impacts negatively on their GCSE coursework.
79. Teaching is very good across the subject. Strongest features of the most effective teaching are profound subject knowledge, planning and assessment of pupils' progress. The pupils receive well-focused feedback on their work that helps them to raise their standards. Teaching in class leans towards checking and developing understanding. The searching questions from the teachers encourage the pupils to consider their answers more carefully and therefore develop their thinking skills so they learn more quickly. The sharing of innovative ideas and good practice is helping to raise standards. The use of PowerPoint presentations and the interactive white board add a new visual impact to learning.

80. The department is led and managed very well. Where possible the science is linked to everyday life reflecting the philosophy of the newly acquired science school status. The department has ambition and this is shown in the way they have raised the achievement of high attaining students in Year 9, with strategies in place for another year of improvement. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

The quality of provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership and management are very good.
- Standards of work in Years 7, 8 and 10 are good or better.
- Assessment is a weakness in Years 7 to 9.
- Improvement since the last inspection is good.

### **Commentary**

81. Standards on entry to the school are variable and broadly average when compared with the national picture. At the end of Year 9 standards are above the national average. Pupils with special educational needs are fully integrated in lessons and progress as well as other students. Able pupils progress well and sometimes very well. Standards in the lessons seen were consistently above expectations. Achievement is good.
82. All students take the subject in Years 10 and 11. In 2003, the GCSE examination results were very high compared with the national average; nearly all pupils obtained A\* - C grades and three-quarters of them A\* and A grades. The examination results obtained in the short GCSE course were similar. Standards in the lessons seen varied but were very good overall. The standard of the work seen in Year 10 was higher than that in Year 11. Achievement is good overall.
83. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 is good. The recently introduced assignments in which pupils work independently and progress according to their ability are effective. Topics are clearly explained and the pupils' involvement increases through effective questioning. There are some very good whole class discussions that enrich the learning. Pupils' attitudes are generally good. Pupils are not challenged as well in Year 9 as they are in Years 7 and 8. The method of assessment used by teachers over-estimates attainment and does not allow the pupils' true performance to be accurately monitored. The accommodation in the lower school is unsatisfactory and has a negative impact on learning and the overall effectiveness of teaching.
84. The quality of teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 varies but is good overall. However there is some unsatisfactory teaching. The quality of some of the coursework is very high. All activities are timed well and pupils know when coursework must be completed. Pupils know how to improve their work.
85. The newly appointed director of the subject has been very effective in changing the methods of teaching and the schemes of work in Years 7 to 9. The guidance given to pupils on how to complete coursework in Years 10 and 11 is now more appropriate. The subject is supported by three non-specialist teachers and their contributions vary considerably. Change since the last inspection is good. The computer network has been extended but the number of pupils to each terminal remains less favourable than the national average.

## Information and communication technology across the curriculum

86. Opportunities to apply information and communication technology in other subjects are satisfactory overall. In geography, pupils use computers effectively to investigate localities both in the United Kingdom and overseas, weather and the impact of major events such as volcanoes and earthquakes. In mathematics, pupils apply spreadsheets and databases to their work to a satisfactory level and in science pupils use computing to record events, prepare presentations and to publish work. In most other subjects, pupils use computers to research topics on the internet and word process work. The application of information and communication technology in English, design and technology, modern languages, history, art, physical education and music in Years 7 to 9, is an area for development.

## HUMANITIES

### History

Provision in history is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and excellent management are effective in improving standards.
- Very good teaching helps pupils to learn very well.
- Pupils achieve very well due to very good attitudes to learning.
- The subject lacks a coherent information and communication technology programme, and sufficient fieldwork visits.

### Commentary

87. Results in GCSE examinations, including at the highest grades, are very high and the overall trend is upwards. The subject is much more popular than nationally. Pupils' performance is significantly higher than in other GCSE subjects.
88. By Year 9 standards are well above average. Achievement over Years 7 to 9 is very good. This is the result of consistently high quality teaching and well-motivated, able pupils who work very well. By the end of Year 9 pupils have a very good grounding in historical skills. Most have a very good understanding of the main events and people studied. However, the most able pupils are not always sufficiently stretched and do not appreciate the wider context of study enough. By Year 11 standards are very high. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good as pupils respond confidently to very good teaching with suitable challenge and pace. By Year 11, pupils have further developed their skills in using historical evidence and are very competent in undertaking historical enquiry using a wide range of source material. The best independent GCSE coursework is of exceptionally high quality.
89. Teaching is very good. There is a relaxed yet purposeful air in lessons that is conducive to high quality learning. A particular strength is the emphasis placed on investigation skills and there is good enquiry project work. The regular monitoring and testing of pupils' knowledge results in very productive learning. Learning benefits significantly from the consistently very good attitudes and behaviour of pupils in lessons. There would be further improvement if lesson aims were more precisely focused on what pupils will know, understand and be able to do, and at the end of the lesson they were tested thoroughly for effectiveness on these.
90. Leadership of the subject is very good and management is excellent. Curriculum planning and assessment are of very high quality although there are some weaknesses in the plans for the development of skills in information and communication technology. Fieldwork undertaken in Years 7 to 9 provides most effective learning and greatly stimulates pupils' interest in the

subject but it needs developing in Years 10 and 11. There has been sustained improvement in the raising of standards since the previous inspection.

## **Geography**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There is very good teaching which promotes high standards.
- There are very good marking and assessment procedures that are used to improve the curriculum and monitor pupils' progress.
- There is excellent provision for fieldwork and for the teaching of skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology.
- There is some variation in the quality of teaching but it is never less than good.

### **Commentary**

91. Examination results in 2003 in GCSE are amongst some of the best in the school with almost three-quarters of pupils awarded the highest grades A\* and A, and all pupils awarded grades A\* to C. The subject is popular with almost 40 per cent of the year group entered for the examination, well above the national figures.
92. Pupils come to the school with above average standards in geography although many still need to develop geographical skills. In Years 7 to 9 the standard of work seen in pupils' books is high. The achievement of these pupils is very good. In Years 10 and 11, standards in GCSE are high and still improving. The maintenance of high standards represents very good achievement for pupils.
93. By the end of Year 9 pupils have developed very good geographical skills with maps, diagrams, the use of geographical terms and in the use and analysis of data. They write essays, collect information, use graphs, work creatively and produce reports using computers. By the end of Year 11 pupils have a very good understanding of local and global issues on a variety of topics; they can make comparisons and relate facts, causes and effects. All pupils produce good factual work and undertake research but some pupils provide less detail and use fewer references to case studies.
94. Teaching is very good overall with some excellent teaching. In the best lessons, the questioning of pupils is a strength and pupils are targeted for answers. This encourages pupils to develop their own ideas and ensures more pupils take an active part in the lesson.
95. Leadership and management are both excellent. There is a commitment to high standards and expertise is shared within the department and other institutions. Monitoring of teaching and assessment is thorough and involves all teachers. Improvement since the last inspection is very good.

## **Religious education**

Provision for religious education is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- There are high standards.
- The teaching and learning are very good.
- There is very good leadership and management.
- Time allocation for teaching the Agreed Syllabus in Years 10 and 11 is low.

## **Commentary**

96. In the 2003 GCSE examinations, the proportion of pupils gaining grades A\*-C is well above the national average, and their average point score is well above the national average point score. These high standards have been maintained since the previous inspection and the number of entries has more than doubled.
97. Standards in the non-examination Agreed Syllabus course in Years 10 and 11 are above average and achievement is good. They are lower than in the examination course because there is insufficient time allocated for teaching the Agreed Syllabus and this restricts the achievement of pupils.
98. At the end of Year 9, standards are well above average, and pupils are achieving very well.
99. The quality of teaching and learning is excellent in a high proportion of lessons, and is very good overall. Where pupils learn most effectively, it is because teachers have an excellent grasp of the subject, an infectious enthusiasm for it, and expect the very best of them. They stretch pupils with highly interesting and challenging activities and tasks, which are well matched to their individual needs. Pupils can take risks in their learning because of the excellent relationships teachers engender in the classroom, based on mutual respect and caring. Where learning is less secure, it is because work is not always well enough matched to the needs of pupils. Marking does not always do enough to help pupils understand how to improve the standard of their work.
100. The subject is very well led and managed by a highly committed and experienced specialist, who has done much to move the subject on. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCSE results are well above average and teaching is good.
- Very high standards of literacy have a significant positive impact on the standard of folder work.
- Drawing is not used sufficiently to explore and experiment with design ideas.
- The impact of computers on both design and manufacturing skills is limited.

## **Commentary**

101. GCSE results in 2003 are well above national averages for both the numbers gaining A\*-C and A\*-A grades. There is some variation between the different design and technology subjects with notable strengths in the textiles and graphic product courses.
102. Pupils enter the school with widely differing experiences in design and technology and make rapid progress during Year 7, quickly reaching standards which are above expectations, representing good achievement. In lessons and the work of pupils approaching the end of Year 9, standards are above expectations. In the extended projects in Year 9 pupils competently contribute to the development of design briefs and skills of review and evaluation are well developed. Making skills are above expectations and show pupils' increasing confidence in the use of tools and processes.



103. The well above average standards seen in the work of those approaching the end of Year 11 match the high standards routinely seen in the GCSE examination and indicates good achievement. Folder work reflects the high levels of commitment and industry seen in lessons. A particular strength is the ability of students to review work in progress and modify their products. Confident literacy skills make a significant contribution to the high standard of product evaluations. Graphical skills are well used to enhance presentation but drawing as a tool for exploration and experimentation when researching ideas is less well used. Making skills are well above average in all areas reflecting the high degree of competence in the use of specialist tools and a very good understanding of the working characteristics of materials.
104. Pupils achieve well because teaching and learning are good. Pupils are fully involved in their learning, responding confidently to questions with well-developed specialist vocabulary and well above average reasoning skills. The teaching of skills is effectively supported by demonstration about the use of tools, materials and processes, but such teaching is sometimes too tightly controlled and restricts learning opportunities. Younger pupils are regularly informed about how well they are doing, reflecting the coherent approach to assessment that is used across the subject.
105. Leadership and management are very good. The difficulties created by the recent fire have been well managed ensuring minimum impact on standards. Since the last inspection improvements have been good.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Drama**

106. As part of the inspection four drama lessons were sampled. Standards achieved in Year 8 and Year 9 lessons were satisfactory overall. Performance skills were less developed than is normally found in pupils of that age because the amount of curriculum time allocated to drama is one lesson per fortnight. The girls' ability to interpret language, character and motivation compensated to a large extent for their relatively limited drama skills. Standards observed in a Year 10 lesson were good and pupils were achieving well. Year 13 pupils working on a devised scene based on "Teachers" were achieving well and had reached a good standard for A Level GCE.
107. The subject is well led and well managed. Numbers in drama are growing rapidly. The curriculum is good and the extra-curricular opportunities are very good. Drama has become well established in a short time. This represents very good progress since the last inspection.

### **Music**

Provision in music is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good standards have been sustained in Years 10 and 11.
- Teaching, learning and achievement are good in all years.
- Nearly half the pupils learn musical instruments, many more than the national picture.
- Limited resources for music technology restrict the development of skills in composing in the large classes in Years 7 to 9.

### **Commentary**

108. At the end of Year 9 standards are above national levels. Standards in performing are well above expected levels for those pupils who learn instruments and are broadly in line with national standards for others. Listening and understanding skills are also good for most and

pupils discuss musical ideas using correct terminology. When composing, pupils are reluctant to trust their imaginations and are over-reliant on teacher instructions. Ideas are often short and under-developed. On entry to the school pupils have a good academic standard but their prior musical experience varies widely and practical work in composing and performing is only in line with national levels at the start of Year 7. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good.

109. GCSE results have been well above national average standards in recent years with approximately half the group achieving A\* and A grades. Numbers were broadly in line with national average but are now rising. Work seen in the inspection confirms these standards are maintained. In performance, pupils play on a variety of instruments and approximately one-third perform at a standard well above the expected level. Composing is competent. Achievement is good for all.
110. Teaching is good overall in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Some outstanding lessons were observed. Teaching is lively, good-humoured and supportive and pupils respond well. Planning sometimes requires more extension tasks and the pace of some lessons could be increased to ensure a good level of challenge for all. Explanations are clear, pupils understand their tasks and the new white-board is particularly well used. Questioning is used effectively to check and extend knowledge and is always inclusive. Teaching, learning and achievement in the many instrumental lessons are good overall and these make a valuable contribution to the department.
111. The subject leader has a good vision for the future development of the department as well as the necessary management skills to achieve the vision, and his leadership and management are good. However, his work-load is very substantial as he has responsibilities across two schools. Rationalisation of this situation by the senior management teams is needed and would be of advantage to both the pupils and the staff of both schools. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## **Art and design**

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

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCSE results are well above national averages and teaching is good.
- Well-motivated pupils produce well above average amounts of quality work for each project.
- The potential impact of visual research is too limited because pupils do not routinely use sketchbooks.
- All pupils in Years 7 to 9 need to be more familiar with the use of computers to enhance their work in art.
- The small studios identified in the last inspection continue to have a negative impact on learning, particularly with large classes in the lower years.

## **Commentary**

112. GCSE results in 2003 are well above the national average as is the number gaining A\* and A grades. Art is one of the weaker subjects when compared to attainment in other subjects although it is a very popular course with almost twice as many pupils entering the examination as the national picture. Pupils enter the school with very different experiences in the development of their artistic skills and the standards displayed in GCSE indicate good achievement in the subject.
113. At the end of Year 9 standards are above those expected nationally. Making good progress since starting the school, pupils' work shows increased complexity indicating good achievement. Work sheets are well used to develop ideas and show good skills of

interpretation and adaptation. Because pupils do not use sketchbooks the impact of research work tends to be limited to specific projects, and the possibility of building a valuable resource for future reference is restricted. Approaching the end of Year 11 observation drawing and visual research continue to be vital to the development of projects and are significant factors in raising standards. Pupils make good connections between their own work and that of artists they study utilising elements of style rather than merely copying. Encouraged to experiment with media, pupils develop sensitive paint handling skills and a willingness to work in three dimensions.

114. The quality of teaching and learning are good. The well above average amount of work presented for each project reflects teachers' high expectations and pupils' motivation. Teachers use demonstrations of techniques well, leading to good learning about how best to approach a task. Discussion is used effectively to help focus on how to resolve problems and is a significant aid to learning. Pupils are well informed about how well they are doing and those doing GCSE are given detailed information about how work can be improved.
115. Leadership of the subject is good. Management is satisfactory with the routines of the department being organised well but other tasks such as analysis of data and the effective use of assessment information to inform planning are less well done. Since the last inspection standards have been maintained and improvement overall is good.

### **Physical education**

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

### **Main strengths and weakness**

- Assessment data is used very effectively to inform lesson planning and target setting.
- Planning reflects the strategic goals of the school. Monitoring of all aspects of performance in the subject is extremely rigorous.
- The application of information and communication technology to the work of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is limited.

### **Commentary**

116. Standards at the end of Year 9 are in line with national averages. This shows good achievement for many pupils in relation to when they started in Year 7, including those with special educational needs, who make good progress. Results in GCSE in 2003 are high with all pupils awarded grades A\*-C and more than 85 per cent awarded the highest grades A\* and A. The number studying the subject is almost twice the national average and the results in 2003 are amongst the best in the school. This represents good achievement across Years 10 and 11. Pupils make good use of information and communication technology in Years 10 and 11 but less so in the earlier years.
117. The quality of teaching and learning is good, and shows many features of very good practice. A major strength is the very sophisticated way that teacher assessment and student self-evaluation informs teaching and learning. Pupils in all years display great maturity and take responsibility for many aspects of their own learning. There are very good relationships between teachers and pupils, and pupils have excellent attitudes to their work. The subject is not supporting pupils' understanding of healthy life styles as many pupils do not shower at the end of the lesson. There is sometimes insufficient focus on the development of skills before pupils move into equal-sided games.
118. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The issues raised in the previous report have been fully addressed and very good progress has been made. There is a very wide range of extra-curricular activities that caters for, and extends pupils of all levels of ability.

A significant number of pupils achieve very high standards in sporting activities with local, regional and national associations.

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

### **Personal, social and health education (PSHE)**

119. The school makes very good provision for pupils' personal, social and health education. It makes a very strong contribution to pupils' development as citizens, to their moral and social development and to their action planning. In lessons seen during the inspection, pupils in all years learned well in lessons on topics ranging from bullying, to healthy life styles, collaborative working, pregnancy care and action planning. Pupils learn and achieve well because they are taught well by committed tutors, and because of the very good attitudes they bring to lessons.
120. Overall provision for PSHE is good in the main school and the sixth form. There is an adequate allocation of time, although sometimes this has to be devoted to other priorities. All teaching seen during the inspection was at least satisfactory and some was good. Topics which are covered on several occasions during each pupils' time in the school, for example sex education, are well planned to match pupils' increasing maturity. Good use is made of a planned programme of outside speakers to both add a new perspective and to offer additional informed input in areas where form tutors might be reasonably seen to have insufficient expertise.

### **Citizenship**

Provision for citizenship is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Leadership is very good and management is excellent.
- There are very high standards.
- Teaching is very good.
- There are innovative Citizenship Days.
- Monitoring is at an early stage of development.

### **Commentary**

121. Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are well above national levels. Pupils have a very good knowledge and understanding of the values under-pinning the concept of citizenship and of how democratic institutions work at local, national and international levels. Their skills of enquiry and communication are highly developed. They can research and evaluate differing responses to contemporary moral and social issues, ranging from substance abuse to the ethics of fair trade.
122. Pupils welcome the rich opportunities the school affords them to show initiative and take responsibility in its daily life. They are keen to contribute, whether, for example, as form leaders or monitors, peer mentors, prefects, or through serving on the highly effective school council. Their sense of responsibility for others is shown in excellent support for a very wide range of charities. Pupils show initiative and act responsibly, because they are involved in decision - making, and because the whole culture of the school is one of responsible action.
123. Pupils learn and achieve very well, because of the excellence of the school's planning for citizenship, and because they are taught very well. This was very well evidenced during the inspection week in the superbly planned and delivered Year 8 Citizenship Day, on the issues of children's rights and fair trade.

124. The leadership of the subject is very good and the management excellent. Pupils are given very good opportunities for evaluating their own learning through their citizenship record books. The programme is characterized by coherence and rigour, and by very effective teamwork in its delivery. Pupils value it. If standards are to be further raised, there is now a need for the school to strengthen its procedures for monitoring pupil achievement.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE JOINT SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, twelve 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 2003. Some performance information is not available because the small numbers of students taking the course do not permit valid statistical comparisons.

### Level 3 GCE AS level courses

*This table reflects the results of those pupils who did not carry forward their AS points into Y13. The high retention rate from Y12 to Y13 in the joint sixth form is reflected in the national comparisons.*

Subject		Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
			School	England	School	England	School	England
Art	Males	5	100	73.8	0.0	16.7	34.0	25.6
	Females	4	75	83.8	25	27.8	27.5	32.5
Accounting	Males	NA						
	Females							
Business studies	Males	5	80.0	75.6	40.0	15.4	40.0	25.5
	Females	3	100	77.5	0.0	17.6	26.7	27.0
Biology	Males	5		62.9		10.9		19.7
	Females	13	92.3	67.0	23.1	11.3	35.4	21.3
Chemistry	Males	5	100	70.5	20.0	12.4	34.0	22.9
	Females	11	100	75.3	18.2	15.7	33.6	25.4
Classical Studies	Males	2	100	85.3	0.0	28.4	20.0	32.8
	Females	8	87.5	89.0	0.0	39.0	23.8	37.0
Communication Studies	Males							
	Females	3	100	88.0	0.0	27.4	30.0	33.8
Computing	Males			N/A		N/A		N/A
	Females	NA						
Drama	Males	1	100	82.6	100	14.3	50.0	27.5
	Females	3	100	88.5	0.0	22.3	30.0	32.2
Economics	Males	4	50.0	71.8	50.0	18.1	27.5	25.2
	Females	NA						
English literature	Males	5	100	83.8	60.0	16.3	42.0	28.6
	Females	14	100	86.9	21.4	20.3	38.6	30.9
French	Males	6	83.3	79.7	0.0	21.0	30.0	28.6
	Females	7	57.1	77.6	14.3	17.9	25.7	27.1
Further mathematics	Males	NA		N/A		N/A		N/A
	Females							
Design & Technology	Males	2	100	70.7	50.0	11.8	45.0	22.8
	Females	10	90.0	81.2	60.0	20.2	44.0	29.1
General studies	Males	NA		73.9		17.8		25.7
	Females							

Geography	Males	3	66.7	72.5	33.3	16.4	33.3	24.8
	Females	3	100	76.5	66.7	24.0	53.3	28.6
German	Males	NA	100	79.0	50.0	18.8	35.0	28.3
	Females							
History	Males	9	88.9	79.3	11.1	16.5	27.8	27.2
	Females	17	76.5	81.8	35.3	21.8	32.4	29.7
Information Technology	Males	19	84.2	65.8	36.8	10.2	30.5	20.8
	Females	6	100	69.8	16.7	12.5	30.0	22.8
Law	Males	NA		N/A		N/A		N/A
	Females							
Mathematics	Males	15	66.7	58.7	20.0	15.8	26.7	20.7
	Females	17	70.6	67.0	17.6	19.1	24.1	24.4
Music	Males	2	50.0	83.5	0.0	18.8	10.0	28.9
	Females	1	100	89.7	100	24.2	50.0	32.7
Other Social Studies	Males	20	45.0	65.7	20.0	12.4	19.0	21.6
	Females	22	81.8	72.3	27.3	19.4	32.3	25.8
Psychology	Males	N/A		N/A		N/A		N/A
	Females							
Physics	Males	6	50.0	64.8	16.7	11.6	15.0	20.5
	Females	3	100	79.4	66.7	22.6	50	29.1
Politics & government	Males	20	95.0	N/A	50.0	N/A	41.5	N/A
	Females	40	97.5		70.0		49.3	
Religious Studies	Males	7	57.1	76.4	14.3	18.2	21.4	27.1
	Females	3	100	81.9	33.3	24.6	43.3	31.0
Sociology	Males	1	100	68.4	0.0	13.7	20.0	23.1
	Females	3	100	73.3	33.3	20.5	33.3	26.4
Spanish	Males	2	50.0	78.5	0.0	17.7	15.0	27.5
	Females	12	75	78.5	16.7	17.7	27.5	27.2
Sports/PE Studies	Males	2	100	70.9	50.0	7.9	40.0	21.2
	Females	1	100	78.5	0.0	19.5	30.0	27.5
Theatre studies	Males	NA		N/A		N/A		N/A
	Females							

### Level 3 GCE A level courses

Subject		Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
			School	England	School	England	School	England
Accounting	Males	NA		N/A		N/A		N/A
	Females							
Art	Males	7	100	97.7	57.1	41.5	91.4	87.5
	Females	12	100	98.9	50	54.1	91.7	90.0
Business studies	Males	6	100	98.7	50.0	34.9	93.3	79.1
	Females	9	100	98.8	66.7	39.7	93.3	80.7
Biology	Males	14	100	95.6	42.9	34.6	85.7	75.2
	Females	27	100	96.8	63	42.1	93.3	80.7
Chemistry	Males	16	100	97.0	56.3	45.4	93.8	82.3
	Females	27	100	98.1	63	52.3	94.1	87.3
Computing	Males	NA		N/A		N/A		N/A
	Females							
Classical Studies	Males	5	60.0	99.0	20.0	50.3	48.0	87.3
	Females	6	100	99.8	16.7	59.2	66.7	93.0
Communication Studies	Males	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
	Females	5	100	99.6	80	41.4	100	84.1
Design & technology	Males	5	100	97.1	80.0	29.5	104.0	74.1
	Females	9	100	98.8	88.9	42.7	106.7	83.3

Drama	<i>Males</i>	4	100	99.0	25.0	30.9	70.0	78.8
	<i>Females</i>	11	100	99.7	45.5	43.7	89.1	85.4
Economics	<i>Males</i>	4	100	98.9	25.0	50.7	80.0	87.4
	<i>Females</i>	2	100	99.2	100	55.4	120	90.7
English literature	<i>Males</i>	21	100	99.2	76.2	46.1	105.7	86.2
	<i>Females</i>	53	100	99.6	83	46.7	105.7	86.7
French	<i>Males</i>	2	100	98.7	50.0	52.7	80.0	88.2
	<i>Females</i>	3	100	98.8	66.7	51.0	86.7	87.3
Geography	<i>Males</i>	10	100	98.5	50.0	39.5	92.0	80.9
	<i>Females</i>	10	100	98.9	70	50.3	100	87.7
German	<i>Males</i>	2	100	98.4	0.0	47.5	80.0	84.6
	<i>Females</i>							
History	<i>Males</i>	18	100	98.9	72.2	40.8	98.9	82.8
	<i>Females</i>	26	100	99.0	65.4	48.0	96.9	86.2
Information and communication technology	<i>Males</i>	13	100	95.4	38.5	24.0	75.4	69.0
	<i>Females</i>	5	100	96.3	40	26.2	72	71.0
Mathematics	<i>Males</i>	34	100	96.1	58.8	53.3	95.3	87.2
	<i>Females</i>	17	100	97.6	52.9	59.5	92.9	91.7
Music	<i>Males</i>	2	100	98.4	50.0	37.8	100	79.7
	<i>Females</i>	7	100	99.2	57.1	40	88.6	82.3
Music technology	<i>Males</i>			N/A		N/A		N/A
	<i>Females</i>	NA						
Other Social Studies	<i>Males</i>	17	100	96.1	52.9	36.6	85.9	77.1
	<i>Females</i>	51	98	98	70.6	45.5	95.7	84
Physics	<i>Males</i>	16	87.5	96.4	37.5	42.9	76.3	80.6
	<i>Females</i>	6	100	97.9	33.3	50.5	80	85.9
Politics & government	<i>Males</i>	9	88.9		44.4		73.3	
	<i>Females</i>	22	95.5		72.2		95.5	
Psychology	<i>Males</i>							
	<i>Females</i>	NA						
Religious studies	<i>Males</i>	2	100	98.0	50.0	43.3	80.0	83.5
	<i>Females</i>	8	100	99.1	62.5	48	92.5	86.4
Sociology	<i>Males</i>	1	100	97.6	0.0	38.0	80.0	79.3
	<i>Females</i>	11	100	98.5	63.6	46.4	89.1	85.1
Spanish	<i>Males</i>	2	100	98.7	50.0	47.2	80.0	85.6
	<i>Females</i>	7	100	98.1	28.6	51.3	77.1	87.4
Sports/PE studies	<i>Males</i>	3	100	97.6	33.3	24.8	86.7	71.1
	<i>Girls</i>	3	100	98.7	33.3	41.4	86.7	82.3

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on the course leading to AS and A level qualifications in English literature in Years 12 and 13. Lessons were also sampled in modern languages. These had excellent features: planning, teacher-student relationships, focus to lessons, challenge, pace and obvious enjoyment of the language.

### English literature

Overall provision is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- A2 results are excellent and represent very good achievement.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and teaching skills that promote a very good quality of learning for all students.
- The management of the joint provision for English in the sixth form is excellent.

- Although students have good information and communication technology skills, computers are not available for use in most classrooms and the poor quality of some classrooms limits the range of activities.

### **Commentary**

125. In 2003, standards at A level were very high in comparison with the national average with the majority of students being awarded the highest grades. The trend in the last three years has been for results to be similarly high and for retention rates to be very good. Standards are equally high in the present Year 13 classes. Far more female students study literature.
126. Achievement is very good because of the quality of teaching and the very positive attitudes and response of the majority of students. Students on the AS course have a wide range of ability. Nevertheless, they achieve very well because difficult text such as Chaucer is made accessible and students are helped to appreciate the characters and the humour of The Canterbury Tales. The careful use of background information enables higher attaining students to understand and explain literary conventions such as courtly love.
127. In Year 13 work students receive a high level of support with unfamiliar vocabulary and the historical context so that they develop an in-depth understanding of what it meant to be a soldier during the Great War. Assessment is very effective, work is marked very carefully and comments provide clear advice on strategies for improvement. Students are given valuable opportunities to reflect on and evaluate their own and others' work. They are confident in using websites for research and use computers for written work but there are only limited computer facilities for presentations in the classrooms.
128. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge and experience in teaching at this higher level ensures very effective learning in the classroom. A particular feature of the teaching is the way in which students' ideas and contributions are valued, used and developed for the benefit of the whole class. Teachers encourage discussion and the sharing of ideas well but poor accommodation at times limits the range of activities.
129. Excellent departmental management ensures that English is very well taught and that resources and assessment have been developed very well. Teachers from the two schools share responsibility for different units of the course and all aspects of examination preparation are very effective. The subject is very well led. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good.

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

130. Standards are similar to those found in sixth forms where attainment on entry is above the national level. Students have good or very good skills in writing and the necessary reading skills for research in academic subjects. Oral work is very good and students articulate their views well. In English students skim and scan texts efficiently and most students use their drafting and redrafting skills appropriately in writing in all subjects. Written work varies in standard and there are some errors in spelling and punctuation but the majority of students have sufficient skills to ensure at least a C grade on completion of their course. The libraries in both schools are used well.

### **MATHEMATICS**

The focus of the inspection was on the course leading to AS and A level qualifications in mathematics in Years 12 and 13. A level further mathematics was also sampled. Here, the teaching was very good and standards well above average. Some work is of the highest quality and consistent with initial requirements for studying mathematics at undergraduate level.



## Mathematics

Overall provision is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising quickly and are now well above average overall.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good, and students are achieving well.
- There are some weaknesses in students' presentation of diagrammatic and written work.

### Commentary

131. In 2002, A level results were average overall but they improved sharply in 2003. Current standards in Year 13 are well above average and demonstrate a further substantial rise. In 2003, well over half of the students gained the highest grades A and B whilst all except two passed in the range A to E. Results at AS level and to a lesser extent at A level in 2003, although strong in terms of higher grades, did represent some underachievement for a small group of males. For the last two years, female students have outperformed males at A level mathematics by approximately the same margin as they have nationally.
132. Current standards in Year 13 are well above expectations and represent good achievement for male and female students. There is little evidence of any underachievement. Students frequently show very good numerical and algebraic skills, which allow them to work quickly and logically through challenging written questions. A strong feature is their ability to work out solutions to problems without undue dependence on their teachers. Written work is generally presented well, logically sequenced and sufficiently detailed to satisfy examiners at this level. However, a few students, particularly males, do not do justice to the depth of their knowledge and understanding because their presentation of diagrams is weak and they do not show enough working during problem solving exercises. Students in Year 12 are also doing well. Achievement is good, especially as some students' GCSE results in mathematics are rather modest for supporting study at this level.
133. The quality of teaching and learning is good. The best teaching anticipates the difficulties that students will encounter and has support for these built into the planning of lessons. Questioning of students in class checks understanding well and enables teachers to know when to proceed to new areas of learning. However, some students would justifiably appreciate more of their homework to be assessed against A level grade criteria. Formal assessment through testing is good. It enables students to have regular feedback, and keeps them well informed about how they are getting on.
134. Leadership and management of mathematics at this level are good. The course is well organised between the two schools to ensure that all elements of the syllabus are completed on time and in sufficient depth to enable most students to reach their potential. However, there is insufficient teaching time on the timetable to enable the weaker students to understand and explore fully all of the topics that they need to study. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good

### Mathematics across the curriculum

135. The majority of students have good mathematical skills that support them effectively in their study in other subjects. Most students, both males and females, join the sixth form with GCSE grades in mathematics that are generally well above the average. This provides them with a firm foundation for continuing well in courses that require good numerical skills. However, there is no overall co-ordination or monitoring of the development of numeracy across the sixth form and so there is no safety net for the few students who are insecure in the use of mathematical skills.



## SCIENCE

Biology, chemistry and physics at both AS and A2 levels were inspected in full.

### Biology

Overall provision is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching is very good leading to very good learning
- The students have a very good attitude to work.
- There is a very good range of modern textbooks, specialist magazines and monographs.
- The monitoring of key skills needs developing.

#### Commentary

136. The advanced level results in 2003 were well above the national average with all students achieving a pass and nearly two-thirds achieving a higher grade of A or B. The proportion of students achieving a higher grade improved from 2002. The number of students studying has increased considerably in recent years. Retention of students is excellent and all students complete the course.
137. Standards in the current Year 12 and 13 are well above national expectations. This represents very good achievement for many of the students who enter the sixth form with a full range of GCSE pass grades. There is a strong value added element with many advanced level students in 2003 achieving grades above their predicted grades based on their GCSE performance.
138. Students have a very positive attitude to their studies and as a result have made considerable gains in knowledge and understanding since GCSE. While most students are competent in numeracy and information and communication technology, their development in these key skills is not monitored.
139. Teaching is very good and this has led to very good learning. The teachers have a very good knowledge and understanding of biology and this allows them to clarify any misconceptions the students may have. Lesson planning is very good and because of this, practical work forms an important part of the coursework and this is well supported by a wealth of up-to-date texts. Students know what they need to do to improve as a result of regular testing and focused feedback using examination board criteria and grades. There is also considerable self-evaluation.
140. Management of the subject is good and ensures that students are aware of how well they are doing. Innovation is strong and curricular changes from linear to modular have helped students to raise standards. A high priority is placed on sharing good practice, which exposes the students to a wider range of strategies therefore improving their learning. The use of information and communication technology has improved considerably since the previous inspection and students regularly use computers to analyse large-scale ecology data.

## Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching encourages students to make good progress in lessons.
- Students' very good attitudes assist their learning.
- Standards in external examinations are good.
- Good use of information and communication technology supports teaching and learning.

### Commentary

141. A level and AS level results in chemistry are good and well above the national averages. In terms of students' prior attainment A and AS results indicate satisfactory achievement.
142. Standards observed during inspection are high. Year 13 students showed good understanding of the theoretical basis of buffer solutions. Similarly, Year 12 students used previous knowledge of enthalpy to calculate the enthalpy involved in various reactions. A small number of students, particularly those with limited GCSE grades, found some of the concepts difficult but achievement was generally very good.
143. Teachers make good use of their subject expertise to enthuse and encourage students to do their best. They plan their lessons well so that students are interested in the course and have the motivation to work hard. Good use is made of computers in chemistry teaching. Students are provided with appropriate challenges that enhance their learning. Student motivation is very high and they make excellent use of their time and the resources available.
144. Management and administration of the course are essentially co-operative but work well thanks to the professionalism of all the staff concerned. The high academic standards achieved by the students are linked to the good resources, technical help and accommodation available in chemistry. Student numbers in chemistry are large.
145. Since the last inspection student numbers have remained high and external examination results have been good. Therefore, overall progress since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

## Physics

Overall provision is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this to plan lessons with a variety of different activities to stimulate and maintain students' interest.
- Very good relationships and excellent care for the students lead to good progress being made.
- Key skills are not monitored.

### Commentary

146. In 2003 half of the students gained grades A or B, improving on the figure for 2002 for A2 physics. In both 2002 and 2003 the males' results were broadly in line with the national average. Very few females study the subject.

147. Students join the AS courses with a range of abilities and experience in physics. These students generally make the progress that is expected of them. Taking these factors into account, achievement is good. There is a big gender imbalance in all groups (small numbers of female students compared to male) but this does not affect the progress of either. Retention of students from Year 12 to Year 13 is high.
148. The quality of teaching is always good in Year 12 and very good in Year 13. Very good resources allow a wide range of practical activities to be incorporated into the schemes of work. The students appreciate the range of teaching styles offered as a result of having two different teachers. The support that is given to the students is excellent. They are offered small group and one-to-one tutorials during lunchtimes and are able to join a different class either for consolidation of difficult concepts or when they have missed a lesson through absence.
149. Subject leadership is very good. The two heads of department work very cooperatively although, at times, communication is difficult. Management is good, supporting the less experienced teachers through the sharing of good practice and with effective delegation of responsibilities.
150. Since the last inspection there are better opportunities for independent learning by all students. Computers are available for individual work and are used regularly. There are very few females choosing physics as their third or fourth AS level. In consequence the calibre of female students is high but the numbers are low.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

The focus of the inspection was on information and communication technology courses at AS and A2 level. However, some lessons in computing were also observed and are included in the report.

Overall provision is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students' attitudes and ability to work independently are very good.
- Achievement of female students is unsatisfactory.
- Strategic planning is a weakness.

### **Commentary**

151. Students have above average GCSE grades when they join the sixth form. In 2003, examination results in the A level were broadly in line with the national average overall: one in four students obtained A – B grades, and nine out of ten A – E grades. Males performed better than females and their results were above the national average. The examination results in A level computing were above the national average: half of the students obtained A – B grades and all obtained A – E grades. Standards in the lessons seen varied but were above average overall. Achievement is broadly satisfactory with some female students working below their potential.
152. The quality of teaching and learning varies but is good overall. All lessons are well planned and topics introduced effectively. Teachers give good help and advice in practical activities and students know how to improve. Students work independently on coursework assignments very well. There is good emphasis on the requirements of the examination. In a small number of less effective lessons, the attention of the teachers is too focused on small groups of vocal students and the pace of lessons is too slow.

153. The management of the courses is very good. Whilst the heads of the curriculum areas in the two schools work harmoniously together there is insufficient strategic planning of the subject. Progress since the last inspection is good.

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

154. Many students join the sixth form with above average competencies in the use of information and communication technology. They are able to apply their skills in some of their sixth form courses to good effect. However, in a few subjects such as English and business studies weaknesses in accommodation and equipment are restricting the development of students' skills.

## **HUMANITIES**

There were four subjects that were inspected fully at both AS and A2 levels. These include history, geography, politics and government, and psychology. There are two separate courses for A level history. These are early modern history and modern history. Because a considerably larger number of students study modern history the inspection of history has concentrated on this course.

Lessons in A level religious education were sampled. In this subject standards are very high. Students learn and achieve very well because they are taught very well by highly qualified and experienced specialists and because of the very good attitudes they bring to their work.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

Overall provision is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- All teachers provide very good support for students' learning and relationships are very good.
- Although marking and assessment procedures are good, there is inconsistency of practice between teachers.
- There is very good provision for fieldwork; it is well managed and supports students' coursework

### **Commentary**

155. Standards overall are well above average. Results in examinations at AS level are high, and at A2 level results are well above the national average. Students' achievement overall is very good. However, there is a significant difference between the achievement of males and females. Females usually join the course with higher grades at GCSE than males. This explains the lower proportion of males with high grades at AS and A2 but does not explain the larger proportion of males who do not reach their target grade.
156. Students have good key skills. Personal investigations and coursework are well executed. Students' files are mostly well organised with some excellent detailed essays and case studies, but lower attaining students sometimes leave out important detail and evidence, and may include some inaccuracies and irrelevant material. Lower attaining males have less well-developed study skills than females, but there is improvement during the more demanding A2 course. There is a high retention rate for the A2 course leading to large classes.
157. Teaching is good overall but very good and excellent lessons were also seen. In an excellent lesson on the use of a statistical method, calm, probing questioning led to very good responses from students and excellent concentration and learning. The emphasis on geographical testing throughout ensured that students both understood the method and its practical applications to the subject. In other lessons teachers over explained information or added too much, and limited students' learning opportunities.

158. There is dual management of the department and both leadership and management is good overall. Resources and fieldwork are shared and used well to support students but personal study space is limited. Large classes place additional pressure on resources. There is variation in the quality of assessment and the monitoring of student progress and this needs to be standardised. The new format of the sixth form makes comparison difficult but overall standards remain well above average and improvement is therefore satisfactory.

## **History**

Overall provision is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are well above the national average.
- Teaching is very good resulting in very good achievement.
- Leadership and management are both very good.
- A small number of students do not achieve as well as they should.
- The opportunities for the enrichment of the curriculum are insufficient.

### **Commentary**

159. In 2003 examinations, the percentage of students who gained a grade A or B in modern history was well above the national average. The attainment of females was higher than that of males. Standards seen during the inspection confirm that students currently in Year 13 are working at levels well above what is seen nationally.
160. Students join the course in Year 12 with standards in history which are generally well above the national average, although the range of abilities is wide. The majority of students achieve very well. In the current Year 13 there are a small number of males who despite having reached good GCSE grades did not make enough progress at AS level and are therefore not on track to reach the grades at A level of which they are capable.
161. The quality of teaching is very good overall. There is a high level of challenge and expectation. In particular, teachers make very good use of probing questioning in order to make students think hard. In turn, students are very prepared to hypothesise, knowing that their ideas will be listened to with respect and they make very good progress from hearing the ideas of others. Students are given a very clear picture of the criteria by which A level grades are awarded and how to answer questions in order to gain high marks. Teachers provide very good reading lists and high quality advice on the use of these.
162. The quality of leadership and management are both very good. The heads of department from both schools work with a high level of co-operation and regular contact.

## **Politics and government**

Overall provision is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Examination results are well above average and achievement is very good.
- The teaching is motivating, and on occasions inspiring, and generates a 'buzz' of interest and enthusiasm.
- A programme of visits and work experience brings students into contact with professional politicians and authors.

## Commentary

163. In 2003, examination results at all levels were well above average with female students doing significantly better than the males. The proportion of students passing AS level in 2003 at grades A-E and at the higher grades was also well above average. The trend over the last three years has been to sustain a high level of performance with female students consistently outperforming males. Over half of the students achieve a grade higher than their target minimum grades and roughly a third achieve two grades higher, a strong indicator of very high achievement.
164. That high level of achievement is the outcome of very good teaching and learning. The level of teachers' subject expertise is very high and relationships between teachers and students are excellent. Consequently students work confidently and positively, think forensically and critically, whilst engaged in rigorous but thoughtful dialogue either with their peers or their teachers. Dialogues are based on wide reading and internet research. Role-play was used most effectively to promote a better understanding of the complex qualified majority voting system, by which legislation is passed in the European Parliament.
165. Leadership and management of the department are excellent. The assessment of students' work is thorough and developmental. The work of the department is monitored through peer lesson observation and the moderation of students' extended writing. Although students are very articulate and their written styles mature, spelling errors and poor phraseology occur too frequently. The department has a positive literacy policy to support weaknesses identified in the work of some students.

## Psychology

Overall provision is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Enthusiastic teaching by highly qualified teachers promotes good achievement.
- Very good relationships and students' excellent attitudes contribute significantly to students' progress.
- Effective procedures for assessing students' work, together with very good support and guidance, promote good learning.
- Some male students do not achieve as well as they should at the end of Year 12.

## Commentary

166. Results at A level show steady improvement over the last three years. Virtually all students obtain grades in the A to E range and in 2003, almost two-thirds obtained A or B grades. These results were above the national average. One of the features of the results is improvement in performance of male students. These results represent good achievement, on the part of both male and female students, with virtually all awarded grades above those predicted on the basis of previous performance. Results at AS level also show improvement. After two years in which results were affected by staffing difficulties, results rose sharply in 2003, particularly those of males. However, females significantly outperformed males at the higher grades. While the achievement of females is broadly satisfactory, there is an element of underachievement on the part of males. One of the contributory factors to this underachievement is that some students with weak GCSE results choose to take psychology in Year 12 because it is a 'new' subject. However, after commencing the course they experience many difficulties and do not gain the depth of knowledge necessary for examination success.



167. Inspection evidence shows standards in Years 12 and 13 to be above course expectations. The quality of students' oral and written work is very good. They are willing to grasp new ideas and concepts, and in discussion, they express their points of view thoughtfully and without rancour.
168. The quality of teaching is very good. The skilful use of questioning helps to clarify students' understanding of psychological terms and concepts. Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject motivates students who eagerly engage in the many small-group activities that are a consistent feature of lessons. Learning activities are varied and are particularly effective in engaging the interest of male students and are contributing to the good progress they make in Year 13.
169. Subject leadership and management are very good. Very good relationships underpin a strong commitment to success and continued improvement in the subject. Very good progress has been made since the last inspection and the subject is well placed to continue this improvement.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

No subjects were inspected fully but design and technology was sampled. Advanced and AS level lessons in food/nutrition, textiles and graphics were seen. In these lessons, teaching and learning were at least good and achievement reflected students' capability.

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

Art and design was inspected fully. Music and music technology were sampled. Standards and numbers in both the music and music technology courses in the sixth form are rising and the resources for these smaller numbers are very good. There are six computer work stations and a recording studio. One lesson of theatre studies was sampled. In this lesson students' response was good and the standards achieved were above expectations.

### **Art and design**

Overall provision is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- A level examination results are above national averages.
- Teaching is consistently very good, across both years.
- Unclear leadership impacts negatively on the achievement of some students.
- Shared accommodation and some overcrowded conditions logistically limit the range of media and the scale of work open to students.

### **Commentary**

170. The school currently offers AS art for Year 12 students, and the majority convert this into a full GCE A level examination at the end of Year 13. Both courses have become increasingly popular in recent years, with the AS cohort doubling in size since 2001.
171. Overall, standards in the AS level examination are below national averages. Standards at A level, however, are above national averages. This represents a clear improvement in results since the last report. The majority of students speak with confidence about their work. High attaining pupils are particularly well taught. They become extremely competent in a range of mainly, but not exclusively, two-dimensional work. Chosen studies are well researched and conclusions personal and convincing. Such students have a very good understanding of artistic language and knowledge of, and sensitivity towards, the work of a wide range of

contemporary artists and those from other periods. Less competent students, however, are not as successful. They are occasionally confused by what they perceive to be conflicting advice, and their work is sometimes tentative and uncertain. Unsatisfactory leadership and management result in inconsistencies in the support and guidance provided.

172. Teaching and learning in art are consistently very good. All teachers have a clear perception of the course requirements and the units of work, prepared jointly by both departments, are well delivered. They successfully lead students through a series of activities that ensure all assessment objectives are effectively covered. As each teaching group is shared between two teachers, students benefit from a wealth of experience and support, which the majority of them welcome. Three-dimensional work is less evident, and some students feel unable to pursue this option because of their lack of experience in the techniques that they would favour. Work is also limited in scale, partly as a result of the nomadic existence of the student body as they are taught in two different locations each week. The absence of dedicated studio accommodation, beyond a small room adjacent to the Marling department, together with the occasional overcrowded conditions in classrooms, adds to the difficulties of their situation. A small darkroom is also currently out of use.
173. Leadership is unsatisfactory. There is no clear vision for the long-term future of the joint department. Neither does anyone have overall responsibility for art provision. Although both schools acknowledge that the current situation is unsatisfactory, there is a lack of clarity about the way forward. Issues identified as impacting upon the achievement of some students have yet to be adequately addressed.
174. Day-to-day management is satisfactory. Teachers have worked together to try to offer students consistency of provision and support.

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

No subjects inspected.

## **BUSINESS**

All courses leading to AS and A2 level courses in business education were fully inspected. The school also offers economics. This was not inspected.

### **Business education**

Overall provision is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards of work are above average and achievement is good.
- The good teaching results in good learning.
- There is good day-to-day management but no overall responsibility for the subject is restricting development.
- There is no study-skills induction course and few opportunities to visit local businesses.
- There are weaknesses in the accommodation and computer resources.

### **Commentary**

175. Recent A level examination results have improved, with results in 2003 being above the average. There is no significant difference between the standards attained by male and female students although more female students exceeded expectations based on prior attainment. The retention rate on the AS and A level course was very high. A high proportion of students continued into Year 13.

176. Standards seen are above the national average on both courses. Achievement is good overall in relationship to prior learning. Students' work develops well over Year 12. With the more advanced work in Year 13, most students progress well but the understanding of theoretical concepts by a few students is insecure. Critical analysis is being progressively developed over Years 12 and 13 but only the high attainers make use of reading around the subject. Key skills of communication and application of number are at least good. Information and communication technology skills are good but there is less application than in most business studies courses.
177. Overall the quality of teaching is good and some very good teaching was observed. Students are given good opportunities to contribute to discussion and develop ideas, with male students responding far more positively than female students. However, male students' written work is not as developed as that of female students. Students, particularly in Year 12, take insufficient responsibility for their own learning and rely too much on their teacher. Independent learning is insufficiently developed and students do not prepare themselves adequately for active participation in lessons. Overall the assessment of students' work is good.
178. The day-to-day joint management of business studies is good and overall leadership is satisfactory. The two subject co-ordinators work cooperatively together although no one person has the responsibility for maintaining an overview of courses or student performance. Resources are satisfactory overall but there is a shortage of Year 13 textbooks and computers to enhance teaching and promote independent learning. Accommodation in both the specialist business studies rooms is sub-standard with limited scope for displays.

## **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

No subjects inspected.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

No subjects inspected.

## 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>4</b>	<b>2</b>
How inclusive the school is		2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4	2
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	3	2
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>		<b>2</b>
Pupils' achievement	4	2
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>		<b>1</b>
Attendance	2	1
Attitudes	2	1
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	1
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	3	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		2
Accommodation and resources	6	6
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		2
The quality of the school's links with the community	3	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>		<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	5	2
The leadership of the headteacher		1
The leadership of other key staff	3	2
The effectiveness of management	3	2

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

