

INSPECTION REPORT

WYEDEAN SCHOOL

Sedbury, Chepstow

LEA area: Gloucestershire

Unique reference number: 115766

Headteacher: Mr. W. John Claydon

Lead inspector: Bill Stoneham

Dates of inspection: 12th – 15th January 2004

Inspection number: 262690

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

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Terms used in this report

Key Stage 3 refers to students in Years 7, 8 and 9 who have transferred in most cases from their primary schools at the end of **Key Stage 2** after Year 6. **Key Stage 4** refers to students who are in Years 10 and 11. Those students who remain at school after the compulsory period of education are in the **sixth form**, in Years 12 and 13. Students in Years 7 to 11 follow courses and programmes of study set out in the **National Curriculum**. A course in religious education is a requirement for students and students of all ages at school.

At the end of Year 9, students aged 14 take national tests in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. At the end of Year 11, students aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**). Others may follow courses leading to the award of the General National Vocational Qualification (**GNVQ**), or the National Vocational Qualification (**NVQ**). Sixth form students may take further courses leading to awards in the General Certificate of Education (**GCE**) at A-level (**A-level**) or Advanced Subsidiary level (**AS-level**), or the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (**AVCE**).

Inspectors judge the **standards** students reach by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for students of the same age nationally. The students' **achievements** reflect whether they have done as well as expected. Such judgements take account of the educational **value added** over time. In this report, **similar schools** are defined as those having similar standards at the start of each stage of learning.

Efforts have been made to minimise the use of shorthand notations, though some have been used. Throughout the report, the notation **ICT** refers to information and communication technology. The term **SENCO** refers to the special needs co-ordinator. An **LSA** is a learning support assistant and an **IEP** is an individual education plan. **PHSE** refers to the school's programme for personal, health and social education. Comparisons to national averages are based on data for the academic year 2002/2003 for tests and examinations at the end of Years 9 and 11. For sixth form students, comparisons to national averages are based on the academic year 2001/2002, the last year for which national comparative data is available. Any reference to examination results in 2003 is to identify trends only.

No reference is made to students for whom English is an additional language. At the time of the inspection, judgements about the achievement of students with English as an additional language did not apply to the school. There have been students who received language support in the past, however, and systems are in place should the need arise in the future. At the time of the inspection there were too few students with special educational needs in the sixth form to determine judgements about the quality of education they receive.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Foundation
Age range of students:	11-18
Gender of students:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1043
School address:	Beachley Road Sedbury Chepstow Monmouthshire
Postcode:	NP16 7AA
Telephone number:	01291 625346
Fax number:	01291 624251
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs. S Lightbound
Date of previous inspection:	November 1997

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Wyedean is an average sized mixed comprehensive school located close to the historic town of Chepstow. It has 1043 students aged between 11 and 18, of whom 199 are in the sixth form, which is of average size. The school has recently been awarded specialist status as a mathematics and computing college and holds other awards including Investors in People and a Schools Achievement Award (2003). The area served by the school is mixed, but on balance the socio-economic background of the students is favourable. Standards on entry to Year 7 are average overall and are average on entry to the sixth form. Approximately 60 per cent of students in Year 11 continue into the sixth form. The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs is broadly average; however, the proportion with a Statement of Special Educational Needs is below average. The ethnic mix of the school reflects that of the surrounding area, being almost exclusively of white race; very few students speak English as an additional language and none is in the early stages of language development. There are no students from travelling, refugee or asylum seeking families. However, the turnover of regular army units at the local barracks results in approximately 40 students at any one time from service families spending between two and four years in the school before moving on. Approximately three per cent of students join or leave the school other than at the usual times of the year.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
27407	Bill Stoneham	Lead inspector	
13395	Joanna Illingworth	Lay inspector	
23393	Brian Dower	Team inspector	English English Post 16
32912	John Hall	Team inspector	Mathematics Mathematics Post 16
20837	Linda Powell	Team inspector	Science Biology Post 16
10385	Keith Hopkins	Team inspector	Design and Technology
14841	Michael Duffey	Team inspector	Information and Communication Technology Information and Communication Technology Post 16
31690	Bridget Smith	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Languages French Post 16
15971	Michael Pye	Team inspector	History History Post 16
20622	Ann Sydney	Team inspector	Geography Special Educational Needs
32329	Andrew Stafford	Team inspector	Art and Design Art and Design Post 16
31660	Marianne Young	Team inspector	Music Citizenship
18755	Roger Whittaker	Team inspector	Physical Education Physical Education Post 16
32746	Lynda Clarke	Team inspector	Religious Education
13122	Stephanie Matthews	Team inspector	Vocational Education

The inspection contractor was:

Serco QAA
Herringston Barn
Herringston
Dorchester
Dorset
DT2 9PU

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the school is good with very good features, including a very good sixth form. Standards in the main school are above average, representing good achievement. Standards in the sixth form are well above average and students achieve very well. The quality of teaching and learning seen during the inspection was good overall and very good in the sixth form. The school collects much assessment data, but the good practice seen in some departments is not consistent across the whole school. The work of the school has been enhanced by recent improvements to accommodation and learning resources. Good value for money is offered in the main school; in the sixth form it is very good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The very good leadership offered by the headteacher, promoting very good relationships and a harmonious learning community.
- The quality of leadership and management in many departments, allied to the consistently good teaching and the contribution these make to the students' achievement.
- The very good provision made in English, mathematics, design and technology, drama, geography and physical education and the contribution this makes to how well students learn.
- The very effective use of assessment data at a whole school level to improve standards - though the good practice in assessment seen in some departments is not consistent across all subjects.
- The very good leadership, management, teaching and guidance in the sixth form, which are contributing significantly to the high standards.
- The confidence sixth form students show as independent learners and the very good relationships in the sixth form.
- The provision for citizenship, because there is no comprehensive scheme of work, and arrangements for monitoring, assessment and reporting are underdeveloped.
- Science teaching and learning, which are not consistent enough.
- Insufficient time is devoted to teaching religious education in the sixth form.

Good progress has been made since the last inspection. The key issues identified in the previous report have been addressed very well and academic standards have continued to rise faster than those nationally. Accommodation continues to be improved and there is a very well led whole-school assessment initiative, though the fruits of this development have yet to pervade all departments. The school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2001	2002	2003	2003
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	B	A	A	C
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 students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Overall, achievement in the school is good. In Years 7 to 11, standards are above average and achievement is good. The average Year 11 grade in the table above is based on the best eight GCSE results for each student. However, students in Wyedean often take more subjects than this, and the grade does not fully recognise their achievement. In the sixth form standards are well above average and achievement is very good. Standards in English and mathematics are well above average and in science they are above average in Years 7, 8 and 9, but are average in Years 10 and

11. Students with special educational needs achieve well overall. In Years 7 to 9 achievement is good in most subjects, and in English, mathematics and physical education it is very good. In Years 10 and 11, achievement is very good in English, mathematics, design and technology, drama, music and physical education. It is good in all other subjects except science, where it is satisfactory. In the sixth form achievement is very good in all the focus subjects, except in French, history and art, where it is good.

The students' personal qualities are good. Attitudes and behaviour are good, attendance is good and punctuality is satisfactory. **Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.**

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The overall quality of education provided by the school is good. The quality of teaching and learning is good in Years 7 to 11 and it is very good in the sixth form. In the main school, it is very good in English, mathematics, design and technology, drama and physical education. In all other subjects teaching and learning are good, except science where they are satisfactory. In the sixth form, teaching and learning are very good in English, mathematics, biology, French, ICT and physical education. They are good in art and design and history. Throughout the school, learning is enhanced by the subject specialist staff and by the very good relationships that exist between staff and students. Recent improvements in accommodation particularly help learning in subjects such as design and technology and in the sixth form.

The curriculum is good, with continuous improvement made to raise standards and develop independent learning. Students have good opportunities to enrich their learning from a wide range of visits and other educational experiences. Community partnerships are already good and will be strengthened further as a result of the school's recent designation as a specialist mathematics and computing college. The school is well equipped with modern technology and students are well supported in their education and their views are taken seriously. There are, however, weaknesses in the provision of citizenship that need to be addressed.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school is **effectively led and managed.** The leadership of the headteacher is very good. He has established a community where supportive and harmonious relationships are clearly evident and where there is a strong focus on high aspirations and ongoing improvement. The leadership and management of other key staff are good and they are skilled in getting colleagues to work effectively with them to raise students' attainment. Governors are very supportive of the school and they are effective in carrying out most of their responsibilities; however, some statutory requirements are not met.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents and students are very pleased with the school. Parents believe that children achieve well and like the many additional opportunities. Some believe there is too much homework but others consider it appropriate. A few find parents' evenings too rushed and a very few believe there is too much emphasis on examinations. Students like the chance to achieve but also find the school friendly and relaxed. They feel trusted and appreciate the extra-curricular activities. They find many lessons interesting. They think it is progressive and focuses on people as well as achievement.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Ensure that all departments make full use of assessment procedures to track students' progress and inform them of what they need to do to reach their targets.

- Review the provision for citizenship so that there is a comprehensive scheme of work, that teaching is thoroughly monitored and that there are appropriate assessment and reporting procedures.
- Ensure consistency in the quality of teaching and learning in science, in order to raise levels of attainment.

And, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of collective worship for all students.
- Ensure adequate provision is made for the teaching of religious education in the sixth form.

THE SIXTH FORM AT WYEDEAN SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

Wyedean School has a very good sixth form. It is growing in popularity and it offers very good cost effectiveness. Standards in many subjects are well above average, as is the students' average total points score. A-level results have improved since the last inspection and students achieve very well because of the very good teaching and guidance they are offered.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students achieve very well because of very good teaching, monitoring and guidance.
- Standards are high in most subjects.
- Students are confident, independent and develop very good relationships with their teachers.
- The use of assessment data as a device for improving the quality of teaching and learning needs to be applied with more consistency across departments.
- The provision for the teaching of religious education needs improving.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Very good in English . Students are motivated by high quality specialist teaching. Provision in French is good and the quality of teaching and learning is very good .
Mathematics	Very good in mathematics . Standards are well above average, helped by very good teaching and learning.
Science	Very good in biology . The quality of teaching is very good.
Information and communication technology	Very good in ICT . Standards are improving but students need more guidance on how to reach their targets.
Humanities	Good in history , where the best teaching is very good and offers much challenge.
Visual and performing arts and media	Good in art ; teaching is good and students are achieving well.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	Very good in physical education . Standards are well above average and the quality of teaching and learning is very good.

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

Advice, support and guidance are very good. Induction into the sixth form is very good and students who join from other schools settle in quickly. Students receive very good feedback on their work. Their progress is monitored carefully in relation to their targets and action is taken to counter any underachievement. They receive very good preparation for later stages of education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The leadership and management of the sixth form are **very good**. The acting head of sixth form, directly supported by the headteacher, has been very successful in creating an environment where there are high academic standards, rigorous monitoring, supportive relationships and a broad range of curricular opportunities. Students clearly value their experiences in the sixth form, which is becoming increasingly popular in the local community.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students enjoy being in the sixth form and regard the teaching they receive as being demanding and helpful. Some are critical of the advice they receive about courses in the sixth form but, overall, they believe that the sixth form is run very well and is a harmonious community.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

The overall achievement of students, including those with special educational needs, is good, and in the sixth form achievement is very good. Students enter the school with average standards, but by the end of Year 9 standards are above average. Standards are also above average at the end of Year 11 but the school's own analysis of value added shows that, overall, students gain better results at GCSE than is predicted by their prior attainment. Standards in the sixth form are well above average. Students start their sixth form courses with average prior attainment and, overall, gain better results by the end of Year 13 than predicted.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in Years 7 to 11 is good because of the quality of teaching offered.
- Students achieve very well in Years 7 to 11 in English literature and language, mathematics, drama, design and technology, music and physical education.
- Overall achievement in the sixth form is very good; it is very good in English, mathematics and physical education.
- The very good monitoring procedures employed in the sixth form contribute significantly to the students' very good achievements.
- Achievement would be higher if departments used assessment data with more consistency to set students targets and review their progress against such targets.

Commentary

1. The Year 9 national test results in 2003 were broadly average in English, above average in science and well above average in mathematics when compared to all schools nationally. The overall results in these three core subjects were above average. In comparison to similar schools based on prior attainment, standards were below average in English, but were well above average in science and very high in mathematics. Indeed, the results in mathematics when compared to similar schools placed them in the top five per cent nationally. Overall, the schools results were above average in comparison with similar schools.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.3 (36.2)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	38.3 (38.8)	35.4 (34.7)
science	35.5 (36.6)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 151 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

2. Standards in GCSE examinations in 2003 were well above average when compared to all schools nationally, based on both average total GCSE points per student and average points scored on their best eight subjects. When compared to similar schools based on prior attainment, results were above average in terms of average points scored, but below average on a measure based on the students' best eight GCSE grades. The school's own extensive value-added data shows that overall students achieved well in the 2003 GCSE examinations.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	64 (67)	52 (50)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	97 (97)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	40.1 (34.7)	40.0 (34.7)

There were 136 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

3. In the 2003 GCSE results the proportion of students gaining A* to C grades, or the equivalent, was well above average in most subjects and was above average in art and design, drama and geography. In French such results were below average and in German and science they were well below average. In the latter case, staffing turbulence caused some problems with the quality of teaching and learning. In terms of average points scored, standards were above average in most subjects. They were well above average in business studies and physical education, but were average in art and design, science, English, French, German and drama. An analysis of these results shows that achievement was good overall, but in English literature, mathematics, physical education, music and drama, achievement was very good. Achievement in English language was satisfactory, but in science, French and German, it was unsatisfactory. The overall picture, however, is one of success and the main factors contributing to these successes are the quality of teaching and the commitment and willingness to learn of the students.
4. Inspection evidence based on lesson observations and analysis of students' work indicates that for present students in Years 7, 8 and 9, standards are above average in all subjects except English and mathematics, where they are well above average. All students, including those with special educational needs, are achieving well. In Years 10 and 11 standards are above average in most subjects but well above in both English literature and language, mathematics, design and technology, music and physical education. Overall, students are achieving well, but in English literature and language, mathematics, drama, design and technology, music and physical education, achievement is very good. Achievement is satisfactory in science and modern foreign languages. Though the school has extensive assessment data, this is not always used with consistency at departmental level. For standards to rise further all departments need to improve their use of data to the standard of the best.
5. Overall, all students with special educational needs achieve well, including those with statements. They achieve best in ICT and geography because of stimulating teaching and interesting activities, and least well in physical education where students with co-ordination and other problems do not have work matched to their potential. A small number with language or literacy difficulties make unsatisfactory progress, especially in Years 10 and 11. The achievement of gifted and talented students is in line with that of their peers.

Sixth form

6. Standards reached in A-level and equivalent level examinations in 2002 were well above average. Standards were well above average for both males and females. Comparative results are only available for 2002. In this year many subjects returned 100 per cent pass rates and standards were well above average in English, geography, mathematics, drama, and German. In physics, standards were very high with the results placing the department in the top five per cent nationally. Standards were above average in biology, business studies, general studies, history and ICT. They were below average in other social sciences and well below average in chemistry. The standard on entry for this year group of students was broadly average. They successfully built on this base and the school's own extensive value added analysis clearly

indicates that overall attainment was considerably better than predicted based on GCSE results. The achievement of this group of students during their sixth form studies overall was, therefore, very good. The unvalidated examination data for 2003 illustrates similar trends to those in 2002.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	97.4 (94.7)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	39.1 (40.2)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per student	331.9 (339.3)	253.1 (254.5)

There were 58 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

7. Sixth form work seen during the inspection indicated that standards are well above average. In the eight subjects featured in the inspection standards were well above average in English, mathematics and physical education. They were above average in biology, French, history and ICT and average in art and design. Attainment on entry is average, teaching and learning are very good and students achieve very well overall. No differences in achievement between female and male students were discernible. Sixth form students benefit from the close and sensitive monitoring of their progress. Assessment data is used very well to track progress and to ensure that students are challenged in their learning.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are good in the main school and very good in the sixth form. The school makes satisfactory arrangements to promote students' spiritual and cultural development. Its arrangements to promote their moral and social development are good. Students' attendance is good and their punctuality is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Sixth form students have very positive attitudes to learning and their personal development is very good.
- Students in the main school have good attitudes to school and their willingness to learn contributes significantly to their good achievement.
- Students' relationships with members of staff and with one another are very good and create a harmonious community and a good environment for learning.
- Students' behaviour in lessons and around the school is good.
- Provision for students' moral and social development is good.
- The school could do more to promote students' awareness of non-European cultures.
- There are missed opportunities to promote students' spiritual development.

Commentary

8. Students like school and enjoy participating in lessons and in extra-curricular activities. Their positive attitudes are reflected in good attendance. The school's overall rate of attendance is above the national average and only a few individuals are frequently absent without good reason. The school is successful in improving the attendance of anxious students who find it hard to settle in Year 7. Students come to school expecting to learn and to work hard. They respond positively to stimulating teaching. They concentrate well and take a keen interest in their work in lessons that have good pace and contain challenging tasks. Occasionally students are indifferent to learning and, therefore, fail to achieve well. This happens in the small minority of lessons in which the quality of teaching does not engage students' attention. There are a few individuals who lack motivation and have difficulty in keeping on task. These students

sometimes become inattentive and chatty in lessons, but the school has effective strategies for ensuring that they do not disrupt the learning of rest of the class.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	92.7
National data	91.7

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.2
National data	1.1

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

9. The school has good expectations regarding behaviour, and reinforces them with good provision for students' moral development. For example, moral issues are explored in religious education lessons and in National Curriculum subjects and teachers act as good role models of courtesy and respect for other people. The school's work has a positive effect on standards of behaviour. Students have a very good understanding of right and wrong. They accept the school's code of conduct and behave well in lessons and around the school. They are orderly, self-disciplined, and polite to each other and to adults. Sometimes they lapse into boisterous and noisy behaviour, but disruption to lessons and aggressive acts are rare. The school deals effectively with bullying on the few occasions when it does occur. It also has effective procedures for modifying the behaviour of the small number of students who have serious problems with self-control and discipline. Exclusion is used only as a last resort. No students have been permanently excluded and school's rate of exclusion is below the national average.

Ethnic background of students

Exclusions in the last school year

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

No of students on roll
237
2
4
1
1
690

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
3	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
0	0
38	0

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

10. Students have very good relations with one another and with members of staff and, as a result, the school is a pleasant, friendly and harmonious place in which to work and to learn. The quality of relationships is enhanced by good provision for social development. Students of all ages are encouraged to respect one another's point of view and to co-operate with one another in lessons. Older students get very good opportunities to exercise responsibility and to serve the school community. From Year 10 onwards they can volunteer to be peer mentors and in Year 11 they can apply to become prefects. The mentoring and prefect schemes are well organised and successful, and are good examples of effective mutual support. Younger students benefit from the supervision and guidance that they receive; older students become more mature and confident through taking on responsibilities. Prefects and mentors receive good very guidance on how to carry out their roles, as when specialist advisers from the local education authority give prefects training in behaviour management.
11. Although provision for personal development is satisfactory overall, with some good features, the school misses opportunities to promote students' spiritual and cultural development. It does

relatively little to stimulate in-depth reflection. There is no daily act of collective worship, nor a programme of “thoughts for the day” for use in morning registrations. Some National Curriculum subjects, for example art, stimulate students’ imagination and creativity, but overall spirituality is not a strength of the school. Arrangements to promote understanding of European culture are good, but students acquire a relatively limited understanding of other cultures. Multi-cultural awareness is not a major feature in their workbooks or in displays around the school. In general their knowledge is restricted to what they have learned about other faiths in religious education lessons. When discussing this issue with inspectors, students could not recall looking at non-European cultures in other subjects of the curriculum.

Sixth form

12. Sixth form students have very good attitudes to learning. They are very well motivated and are very keen to succeed. At their best, students are creative, original and articulate. They take responsibility for their learning, and as a result achieve well. They show a high degree of commitment to their chosen courses of study. The drop-out rate from the sixth form is very low.
13. Students’ personal development is very good. Sixth formers get very good opportunities to exercise responsibility and show initiative, and they rise well to the challenge. They provide very good role models for students in the main school, particularly in respect of service to the community and care for others. Sixth form students serve their peers as mentors and as members of the anti-bullying committee and sixth form committee. The latter committee organises major fund raising events for charity. With very good encouragement and support from the school, sixth form students develop into mature, responsible young adults who are loyal to the school and to one another, and care about the feelings and welfare of other people.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Overall, the school provides a good quality of education. Teaching is good overall, though in the sixth form it is very good. For further improvements to occur, a more consistent use should be made of data on academic performance at departmental level to ensure that all students are properly challenged and stretched. The curriculum is good. Accommodation and resources are also good, following recent improvements to parts of the school site. Students receive good care, guidance and support. Work with parents and partner schools is good, as is the school’s work with the wider community. Very good partnerships have been developed with other schools and colleges.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good. The quality is good in Years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form it is very good. Assessment procedures are good overall, but a more consistent use of assessment data to improve further levels of attainment is needed.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall quality of teaching is good and helps students to learn well.
- A high proportion of teaching was good or better and this is contributing to the above average standards of the school.
- Students benefit from regular teaching by confident subject specialists.
- Assessment data is comprehensive but its use as a device to raise standards further is not always consistent or informative, except for in the sixth form where its use is very good and is helping to sustain high standards.
- The quality of teaching and learning in science is inconsistent.

Commentary

14. Much of the teaching and learning seen were either good or very good, but only three lessons were excellent. The quality of teaching was stronger in the sixth form, but very good teaching was spread across all year groups and subjects. Only a minority of lessons failed to offer teaching and learning of a suitable quality.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 146 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (2%)	51 (35%)	54 (37%)	35 (24%)	3 (2%)	0	0

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

15. The quality of teaching and learning seen during the inspection was consistent both across subjects and year groups, and has improved since the last inspection. The findings of the inspection team mirror the views of parents and students, all of whom had commented favourably on teaching. The quality seen reflects the work that the school puts into monitoring and evaluating its own performance and the care that is taken in recruiting staff.
16. Many strengths of teaching can be identified, not least that in most lessons seen teaching was delivered by subject specialists and this made a significant contribution to the learning of all students. Learning also benefited because lessons were well planned, they were challenging, the pace was pitched correctly and the students were given appropriate opportunities to enhance their learning by working independently or collaboratively. This was especially so in the sixth form. In the good and better lessons a range of strategies were used to engage and extend the students' learning. This enabled the students to achieve well. Many staff showed good levels of initiative and enterprise. Computers are widely used across the curriculum and students are regularly encouraged to use their ICT communication and research capabilities in a variety of lessons.
17. In Years 7 to 11, teaching and learning were at least good in all subjects inspected with the exception of science where they were satisfactory. In a number of subjects, including English, mathematics, design and technology, drama and physical education, teaching and learning were very good. Where teaching and learning were less effective, teachers opted for tasks that were less demanding and their expectations of what the students might achieve were lower. Teaching became too teacher-centred and pace slowed. Such lessons, however, were in the minority and clustered in Year 7 and to a lesser extent in Year 10. This probably represents some uncertainty by staff of the levels students had reached at the end of their previous learning stage.
18. A very small number of students are withdrawn from lessons for extra help in the special educational needs department. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers have a good knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses but records on individual students need to be organised more systematically. Students have a positive approach to their learning. Most students with special educational needs are supported in class by learning support workers, some of whom are teachers. The quality of support is always at least satisfactory, and sometimes good. For example, in a mathematics lesson a number of students benefited from the learning support worker's interpretations and simplifications. However, there is no time for joint planning with subject teachers and no support in modern foreign languages, where there is a need. ICT is beginning to be used to support students. There are a number of laptops and word processors that are borrowed by students for use around the school. The department has begun to invest in software to use on the school network as a way of supporting particularly dyslexic students.

19. In the short time she has been in post, the SENCO has improved the quality of individual education plans and ensured that all teachers have access to them through the school's computer system. Most departments find this useful and they refer to them in their planning.
20. Overall, assessment is good. The marking of students' work is constructive and linked well to improving their performance. Students' work is regularly assessed and compared with academic records kept on the school's administration system. As a result underachievement is effectively monitored and remedial action is quickly implemented. Predicted target grades for GCSE and vocational subjects are established in Year 10 and students' performance against these predictions is carefully monitored. Whilst assessment data is well provided for at whole school level, further use of this data to inform target setting and curricular planning is variable across a minority of subjects. Assessment is not rigorously linked to National Curriculum levels and descriptors in a minority of subjects, which means that students are unsure about what they need to do to attain a higher level. Only self-assessment is not carried out for citizenship work. Weaknesses in the assessment practice for students with special educational needs result in a lack of rigour in monitoring their progress. Currently there is no easy way of seeing how students with special educational needs are progressing with their basic skills.

Sixth form

21. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. In the subjects on which the inspection focused, teaching and learning were good in history and art and very good in English, French, mathematics, biology, ICT and physical education.
22. Sixth formers benefit from the commitment, enthusiasm and subject knowledge of their teachers. In many classes, and especially in Year 13 where staff and students have worked together for longer, learning benefits from the strong mutual respect that has developed. Students attend lessons expecting to be challenged and they respond most positively to the teaching strategies employed. It was particularly refreshing to hear a group of sixth formers praising the work and commitment of their teachers, with one boy referring to physics teaching as: 'inspirational, because of the way they make us think!' The students appreciated the efforts made on their behalf. Such high praise is rarely heard by inspection teams.
23. The head of sixth form co-ordinates a comprehensive pastoral system that includes very good arrangements for assessment through which students' academic progress is regularly assessed and reported. The process fully involves students. Individual interviews are conducted by tutors and subject teachers and students' attainment and progress are carefully monitored. The records and reports give a clear statement on attainment, with individual targets for improvement. Parents are fully consulted and informed about student progress. Significant assessment data and student records are held on computer, are readily available and are used very effectively by staff to track progress and pinpoint any underachievement.

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good throughout Years 7 to 11. It is broad and balanced and meets the needs of the students. The curriculum offered in the sixth form is very good. The opportunities for activities beyond lessons are good, with very good opportunities for students of all ages to participate in sport. The school has good accommodation overall and it is particularly good in the sixth form following the recent opening of new social facilities. Resources for learning are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school offers a good curriculum that meets the aspirations and needs of a diverse student body.
- Learning is enhanced by the good opportunities offered to students to become involved in extra-curricular activities.

- Recent improvements in accommodation are benefiting all students and particularly those in the sixth form.
- ICT resources for most subjects are good and have improved as a result of the school's specialist college status.
- The provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory.
- The statutory requirement for the provision of a daily act of collective worship is not met and insufficient time is allocated to the teaching of religious education in the sixth form.

Commentary

24. Curricular provision for students in Years 7, 8 and 9 is good because of the range of courses offered and the ICT and other resources available to teach them. Students' academic needs are well met and nourished by the open access policy to clubs and extra-curricular enrichment sessions. This is evident in many subjects. In Years 10 and 11 students are able to choose from a broad range of courses and provision is good. A good example is that students may choose to study two modern languages. All students in Year 11 study the ICT GCSE short course, but present students in Year 10 study the full GCSE course. In the future, only the full course will be offered. Traditional academic courses are augmented by a vocational programme. Indeed, the provision for vocational education is good and plans for September 2004 will extend the range of courses available. All students have work experience placements and those who are studying business and leisure and tourism at GCSE go on a range of appropriate visits. Applied courses in ICT, business and leisure and tourism are open to all students and some higher attaining students have chosen the work related option that enable them to take NVQ qualifications at a local college in a range of vocational areas. Students who have special educational needs progress well and their support teachers accompany them to college. Provision is flexible and inclusive. Some individuals link a college placement with extended work experience although the majority continue with an appropriate range of GCSEs.
25. The provision for citizenship is unsatisfactory because the planning for its delivery is not sharp enough and the school is in breach of the statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship. However, the assemblies that are offered are of a good standard. A good assembly for Years 7, 8 and 9 was seen during inspection. It dealt with a complexity of issues comprising violence, bullying, and supporting one another. The use of drama, storytelling and music had all the students riveted. However, it omitted to give students time to contemplate the issues quietly and privately.
26. The curriculum for students with special educational needs is good overall. The vocational courses introduced in Years 10 and 11 have attracted a number of students with special educational needs and have been successful in keeping them motivated and feeling successful. Several students with special educational needs have been disapplied from modern foreign languages to allow them to concentrate on keeping up with work in other subjects, and this is appropriate. Where students are withdrawn from lessons for extra support, the SENCO goes to great pains to minimise the disturbance to their learning. The special educational needs department attracts many students at lunchtimes and before school with a variety of activities designed to support them informally and develop social skills. This is very successful.
27. Accommodation has been a focus of improvement in the school and most departments have suited rooms, office space and storage areas. There is a range of student work on display around the school which is of high quality, is well cared for and celebrates success. The new design and technology block and the facilities for the special educational needs and religious education are particular strengths. The ICT rooms are also very good with further computer rooms still to be developed.
28. Most departments are well resourced, particularly with textbooks and other resources. There is, however, a lack of computers in some departments such as modern foreign languages but a new computer block is planned to accommodate this. The school has an above average

provision of interactive whiteboards, which support good teaching and learning. The new library, opened last September, is a large and welcoming learning area with a range of books and computer facilities that are still being developed, but good use is made of this facility by students wishing to improve their skills in reading and research.

Sixth form

29. The sixth form curriculum is very good. There is a wide range of AS and A-level subjects and the vocational pathway is developing well. Recruitment to courses is very good and the number of students who join the sixth form from other schools is rising dramatically. The school has planned its curriculum very well to ensure that students' needs are met as far as possible, but with recognition that the school cannot do everything. The provision for extra-curricular activities has recently improved and more time is being allocated for religious education. Consequently, students are now offered more opportunities for reflection and to consider important moral, social and cultural issues. Sixth form provision has been recently enhanced by some very good new accommodation. This includes both social and teaching areas and is much valued by the students. Resources have also been improved. In part this has been because of the school's successful bid to become a specialist mathematics and computing college.

Care, guidance and support

Students in the main school receive good support, advice and guidance, based on effective monitoring of their progress. The quality of support and guidance is very good in the sixth form. Provision for students' health, safety and welfare is satisfactory. The school has very good procedures for involving sixth form students in its work by seeking, valuing and acting on their views. The equivalent arrangements for students in the main school are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good procedures for the induction of new students into both the main school and the sixth form.
- Students have good access to well-informed sources of support and guidance.
- There are very good procedures in the sixth form for reviewing, supporting and guiding students' progress.
- The school makes very good provision for peer mentoring and support.
- The school values students' opinions and has effective procedures for sounding out their views.
- Morning registration sessions are not always used effectively for support and guidance and for interaction between tutors and students.
- To help Year 11 students make better informed decisions about their futures, they should receive more information about other courses available in the area.
- The school's procedures for child protection are not clearly understood by all members of staff.

Commentary

30. Students in the main school receive good care from their first days in Year 7 through to the time that they leave or transfer to the sixth form at the end of Year 11. There are good procedures for the induction of new students and, as a result, students settle well and quickly get to know each other and to find their way around. If they do have any problems and worries, they have a good choice of informed sources of advice. In discussions with inspectors, most students said that there was at least one adult to whom they could turn for help. The school nurse and school counsellor were mentioned but heads of year and form tutors were regarded as the main source of guidance, showing that the system of pastoral year teams is effective. As far as possible, tutors and heads of year stay with the same student groups from Years 7 to 11 and in the process get to know students well as individuals. The system provides good continuity of care and meets students' needs well. Furthermore, anyone who is reluctant to speak to an adult can seek help from a fellow student. The school makes very good provision for this. Peer

mentoring and support is a strength of its pastoral arrangements. For example, there is a well-respected peer mentoring scheme and an effective anti-bullying committee. From interviews with students, it is clear that they value peer mentors and appreciate the work of the "ABC", as they call it, in dealing with instances of bullying.

31. Members of staff and the governing body value students' ideas and have established effective procedures for finding out what they want from their school. The school council is the main sounding board for students' views. It meets regularly and has significant influence over the running of the school. For example, it has been responsible for the design of the new school uniform. Representatives to the council are democratically elected and take very seriously their job of canvassing their fellow students about proposals. Currently they are sounding out opinions on a new style homework diary. There are good links between students and the governing body. The school fund committee, predominantly comprising student representatives is responsible for allocating some £2000 annually to good causes favoured by the school. A student representative also serves on the committee that has oversight of students' and staff welfare and deals with issues such as health and safety in school. Inspectors looked very carefully at the matter of the school buses in response to parents' concerns about health and safety. They found that overcrowding is no longer an issue, as an additional bus is now in operation.
32. The school's programme of personal and social education, which includes careers guidance, is satisfactory overall. However, some sixth formers feel that when they were in Year 11, they were given very little information about sixth forms at other schools in the area and, therefore, were not able to make a well advised choice of courses. There are severe pressures on the time available for the provision of support to students. The timetable allocates one period per fortnight to personal and social education. The fifteen-minute morning registration session provides a further opportunity for tutors to provide advice and guidance and some tutors use it effectively for this purpose. However, students say that the time is usually taken up with routine tasks such as checks of homework diaries. This was true of most of the registrations observed during the week of the inspection. There was relatively little constructive interaction between tutors and their forms during these sessions.
33. Provision for child protection is satisfactory overall. The school has adopted Gloucestershire's child protection policy, but does not include it in the staff handbook. This may be the reason why some members of staff are unclear as to the procedures to follow if they have concerns about a student's welfare. Some school staff could not name the school's child protection officer. Students with special educational needs receive the provision that is in their statements and, sometimes, in excess of this. Annual reviews and transitional reviews are well administered and parents and students take part. Though there are informal discussions about students between the special educational needs department and pastoral staff, mechanisms for formal exchanges of information are in their infancy. More formal arrangements would benefit students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Sixth form

34. The quality of care for students is very good. It makes a positive contribution to standards of achievement and is one of the reasons for the excellent retention rates on sixth form courses. Pastoral staff and subject teachers give students very good support and guidance. Arrangements for the transfer of Year 11 to the sixth form are well organised and effective. External applicants receive the help that they need in order to settle quickly and make good progress. The school reviews the academic and personal progress of every student closely and provides him or her with very good guidance on how to improve. The programme of personal and social education supports learning well by teaching study skills. In the opinion of the inspection team, students of widely different abilities are given very good advice on future courses and careers and receive good practical help with fulfilling their aspirations. For example, the school gives special support to applicants to Oxford and Cambridge. This judgement on careers guidance does not accord with the views expressed by sixth formers in

the students' questionnaire, where many replies were critical of the quality of careers advice. However, students were much more positive when discussing this subject with inspectors during the inspection. The differences in views may arise because Year 12 had little experience of the sixth form at the time when they completed the questionnaire. In addition, some of the arrangements for support and guidance are new and have yet to make their full impact on students. The new head of the sixth form has reorganised and improved aspects of the school's provision by putting in place some very good procedures.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has good links with parents, who give valuable support to their children's learning. Its links with other schools and colleges are very good. Its partnership with the wider community is good. The school's network of links has a positive impact on students' achievements.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The support that the school receives from parents and parents' involvement in their children's learning promote good achievement and progress.
- The school values the contribution that parents make and has good procedures for eliciting their views.
- The quality of links with the community is good and extends and enriches the curriculum.
- The school has developed very good partnerships with other schools and colleges which enhance arrangements for the induction of new students, and extend the choice of courses available to students in Years 10 and 11.
- A minority of parents do not feel adequately informed about their children's progress.

Commentary

35. The school has established close links with parents. It values the contribution that they make to standards of achievement and encourages them to be active partners in their children's learning. Overall, communications between home and school are good and successfully promote parents' involvement in their children's learning. They start with good arrangements for involving parents in the transfer of Year 6 students and continue with weekly newsletters, letters from teachers and consultation evenings. The appointment of the school attendance officer has significantly strengthened lines of communication. She telephones home on the first day that a student is absent without explanation. This encourages parents to contact the school promptly if there are problems. Inspectors do not agree with the minority of parents who feel that they are not well informed about how their children are getting on. After looking at the arrangements for consultation evenings, and at interim and full-year written reports, the inspection team judges that the school provides good information on students' progress. The annual reports give detailed accounts of what students have learned during the year and the standards that they have attained. Teachers' comments are specific to each child, are expressed in user-friendly language and outline strengths, weaknesses and areas for development.
36. Parents are supportive of the school and have a good level of involvement in students' learning. The majority of them have high aspirations for their children. They attend consultation evenings, give good support to extra-curricular activities and expect teachers to set appropriately challenging homework. However, they do not always read and sign students' homework diaries. In general parents are very co-operative if there are concerns about their child's progress. They will work closely with members of staff to resolve any difficulties over attendance, work or behaviour. There are good arrangements for consulting parents over key issues and for making them partners in developments such as the home-school agreement and the majority of parents are satisfied with this aspect of the school's work.
37. Parents believe that children achieve well and like the many additional opportunities. Some believe there is too much homework but others consider it appropriate. A few find parents'

evenings too rushed and a very few believe there is too much emphasis on examinations. Students like the chance to achieve but also find the school friendly and relaxed. They feel trusted and appreciate the extra-curricular activities. They find many lessons interesting. They think it is progressive and focuses on people as well as achievement.

38. The quality and range of information sent to parents of students with special educational needs has recently been reviewed and updated. The SENCO maintains regular contact with the parents and individual education plans contain helpful information about how parents can help their children to learn at home, though it is too early to say how successful these changes have been.
39. The school has a good partnership with the community. It recently acquired status as a specialist Mathematics and Computing College but has not had time to achieve its potential for enhancing community links. The school has appointed a community co-ordinator and she is working on major projects to develop community learning and amenities at Wyedean. The first course for adults, "Computers are Go", was due to start in the week following this inspection. The school's partnership with a wide range of local organisations enhances its curriculum and the quality of its support to students. It works closely with the local education authority's specialist advisers in order to help children who have serious problems. The school also has good links with the Regimental Families Officer over the induction and welfare of students from army families. Visiting speakers make a valuable contribution to the school's programme of personal, social and health education and the support that the school receives from local employers enables all students in Year 10 to benefit from a good programme of work experience.
40. The partnership with other schools and colleges is very well established and makes a positive contribution to students' well-being and academic progress. There are good curricular links with a number of local primary schools and there is effective co-operation between all parties over the transfer of Year 6 students to secondary education. The school works closely with the Royal Forest of Dean College over the provision of a work-related curriculum for students in Year 10 and 11. This widens the choice of courses available to students of all abilities, and helps to keep potentially disaffected individuals in learning.

Sixth form

41. The sixth form has good links with parents and the community. The quality of information on progress is good. The full written reports are very informative on students' strengths and weaknesses in their chosen subjects, and on predicted examination grades. Links with the community are mutually beneficial. For example, students learn to accept responsibility and to use their initiative by organising fund-raising events for charities. The sixth form's links with other schools and colleges and with universities are good and give students good access to information on courses in further and higher education, and on careers. The quality of this provision has been reviewed and the acting head of sixth form has introduced improved procedures to ensure that students are better informed about educational and careers pathways after school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, the school is well led and managed. The headteacher provides very good leadership in establishing the school's ethos and raising standards. The leadership and management of other key staff are good. Governors carry out their responsibilities well, though statutory requirements are not met for a daily act of collective worship or the provision of religious education in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The leadership of the headteacher is very good and his consistently high aspirations for students are supported by all members of the school community.
- The quality of leadership and management provided by the acting head of sixth form, supported by the headteacher, is very good.
- The high quality of leadership and management in many departments makes a significant contribution to establishing a positive team ethos and raising attainment.
- Very good relationships exist throughout the school, which is a harmonious learning community.
- There are good systems in place for monitoring and reviewing the work of the school.
- Students' performance data is well analysed at whole-school level and presented to heads of department in a useful way, but this data is not yet used consistently to raise attainment.

Commentary

42. The headteacher provides very good, enterprising leadership. This has enabled the school to gain specialist Mathematics and Computing College status and to achieve Investors in People status. The acquisition of specialist status is already having a positive impact on the quality of what the school offers to its students and on the role of the school in the community. The headteacher's priorities for the future development of the school are clearly understood and supported by senior staff, governors and other members of the school community. The inclusive approach and shared belief about what all students can achieve is underpinned by effective planning, good curriculum provision and strong pastoral support. There has been a significant growth in numbers in recent years and this has been extremely well managed. The school is held in very high esteem by parents and members of the local community and it is recognised for its high academic standards, as well as for its positive and harmonious relationships. As the school continues to expand, the headteacher and senior staff are clearly focused on continuing to raise standards, while further developing the school's effective partnerships with the local community.
43. Members of the leadership group, heads of year and other key members of staff in the school provide good leadership and management. Most heads of department have a clear vision of what they want to achieve and the skills to take others along with them. Throughout the school, there is a strong commitment to improvement. A detailed analysis of students' performance is provided to heads of department, though this needs to be used consistently throughout the school at departmental level to set targets, monitor progress and raise attainment.
44. Members of the governing body are very supportive of the school and they fulfil their statutory responsibilities, apart from the provision of a daily act of collective worship and the need to ensure that sixth forms students are offered a full entitlement to religious education. The governors have reviewed the provision for a daily act of collective worship, but they struggle to meet the necessary requirement because of a lack of space. Planning for the sixth form curriculum for the next academic year adequately addresses the need for religious education in the sixth form. There are a number of new members who are keen to learn about their role and to take an active part in the development of the school. The chair of the governing body and other key governors are knowledgeable about the strengths of the school, as well as the main areas for development. They are committed to their role of both supporting the school and challenging it, via incisive questioning and careful monitoring.
45. There is an effective annual cycle of monitoring, review and evaluation. Clear targets, related to the school's priorities, are set and detailed planning takes place in order to achieve these targets. There is a rigorous programme of lesson observations in place. Heads of department monitor the quality of teaching and learning within their departments and set performance targets. In addition, members of the leadership group identify areas for focused lesson observations. For example, a recent focus was on the quality of teaching in the sixth form.

Detailed feedback is given to teachers, so that the quality of teaching and learning can be continuously improved.

46. Financial management is good. The school budgets systematically for all expenditure and budget decisions relate directly to priorities for improvement and benefits to students. The school provides good value for money.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,721,131
Total expenditure	2,705,553
Expenditure per student	2,894

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	22,928
Balance carried forward to the next	39,035

47. Leadership of special educational needs in the school is good overall. The SENCO and the two special educational needs governors are newly appointed. They have a commitment to improvement and inclusion and they are working to produce an action plan to comply with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act. The governor's annual report to parents has been improved since the previous inspection and it now complies with statutory requirements. Information to subject departments has improved and the skills of specialist staff are being developed well.
48. In almost all areas, staffing is good with suitably qualified teachers matched to the curriculum and well deployed. In science, however, some staff absence has caused disruption to teaching. Teachers are well supported by technicians in design and technology and the employment of two foreign language assistants supports students' speaking skills well, especially in the sixth form. The number of learning support workers has increased since the last inspection and is now adequate. Their skills are well matched to the needs of students in the school.

Sixth Form

49. Leadership and management of the sixth form are very good. The acting head of sixth form leads and manages the sixth form very well and her work is having a positive impact on the motivation and attainment of students. She has a clear vision for the future development of the sixth form and the headteacher directly and effectively supports her. She has quickly identified areas for improvement and taken action. These include development of the tutorial programme, the introduction of procedures for subject teachers to communicate directly with tutors about any students who might be giving cause for concern, and improvements in the procedures for writing university references. The sixth form attracts an increasing number of students from outside the school. This popularity is a reflection of the high academic standards attained and the extremely positive attitudes of sixth form students.
50. The procedures for monitoring the progress of students are rigorous and effective. Data is used effectively to analyse the performance of students and to set attainment targets. This is followed up with a programme of reviews, to check whether or not students are on target. The results of these reviews are regularly communicated to students and parents.
51. Students clearly enjoy and value their time in the sixth form. They appreciate the personal support provided by the acting head of sixth form, their subject teachers and tutors. Overall, the sixth form is very cost effective.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students attain well above average standards and achievement is very good.
- Students achieve very well because of the very good teaching they receive and their positive attitudes to the subject.
- Over time there have been significant improvements, both in standards and in teaching and learning, because of the very good leadership and management of the subject.
- The written work of a minority of boys lacks structure and cohesion.

Commentary

52. GCSE results in 2003 were average overall in English language but above average in English literature. The proportion of girls attaining a grade in the A* to C range in the 2003 English language and English literature GCSE examinations was well above average and their levels of achievement were very good. This represents an improvement on the standards attained at the time of the previous inspection when girls' results were above average. Boys did equally well in the literature examinations but there was a dip in their performance in the language examinations compared to previous years. Their standards were average and achievement was satisfactory. Students' results in the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9 were in line with national averages and were average when compared to similar schools. Given their prior levels of attainment, achievement was satisfactory. The results were not representative of performance over time, however, because results have been consistently well above average and levels of achievement very good. The drop in the results in Year 9 was because of weaknesses in boys' writing.
53. Students enter the school with average levels of attainment. The standards of written work seen during the course of the inspection were well above average by the end of Years 9 and 11 and, therefore, achievement for girls and most boys is very good. This represents an improvement on performance at the last inspection. Students write fluently and accurately at length and are able to adapt their style for different purposes. There are, however, a small but significant number of boys whose extended writing is poorly organised and who are unable to use complex sentence structures. This was the reason for the dip in the English language results in 2003. The department has already put in place measures to address these literacy weaknesses. Students with special educational needs make very good progress and achieve very well. Reading standards for all students are well above average, as are their speaking and listening skills. They achieve very well in these areas of their work.
54. The very good teaching in Years 7, 8 and 9 and at GCSE level, together with students' positive attitudes to the subject, account for the high standards achieved over recent years and in the work seen. The issues of concern in the unsatisfactory teaching in a tenth of lessons observed at the last inspection have been addressed and students now benefit from work which is challenging and which is taught in a rigorous manner. Stability and continuity in the teaching instil confidence in the students and they respond by working diligently and productively. There is now no unsatisfactory teaching and much that is very good. The challenge facing the department is to ensure that such teaching becomes routine practice and that the exceptional teaching skills of some members of the department are shared to raise the quality of teaching further.

55. The quality of the leadership and management of the subject have brought about the significant improvements in standards and in teaching and learning over time. The leadership provided by the two senior teachers is very good. They are committed to running an equitable and inclusive department where the work of all teachers and students is valued. Morale is high and there is a sense of common purpose and direction which results in effective teamwork. The management of the subject is also very good. Effective systems are in place to monitor and evaluate students' progress and to take appropriate action. Schemes of work have been written to ensure that the curriculum is broad and balanced and that all National Curriculum and examination requirements are met. Appropriate assessment procedures provide students with constructive feedback on how well they are doing and what they must do to improve. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good, with capacity for further improvement because teachers are self-critical and committed to continuous professional development.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

56. Students have well above average English language and literacy skills. They are able to adapt their writing to the needs of the curriculum. Extended writing is well organised and accurate. Students show knowledge and understanding of a range of texts, many containing specialist terminology, because of their well-developed reading skills. This was seen in science where they used specialist language and technical terms with confidence. Students also read aloud confidently, fluently and with expression.
57. Oral skills are well developed. Students explain themselves clearly at length, they can develop and amplify the points they make and they are able to engage effectively in group discussions. They learn well because they are able to listen for extended periods of time and because they show respect for the contributions of other students. In design and technology, time is given for students to think and then explain what they know and understand and this consolidates their learning. The provision for literacy is very good in music with opportunities provided for extended writing and for discussion.
58. The literacy co-ordinator has promoted the sharing of good practice across departments and has clear priorities for future developments. The school has a language and literacy policy and the need now is to establish an effective monitoring strategy to ensure the policy is implemented consistently and effectively.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership is good, resulting in a shared commitment to raise standards.
- Students achieve well in Years 7, 8 and 9 because of good teaching.
- The study of both French and German in Years 8 and 9 results in positive attitudes to language learning and an increasing number of students continuing in Years 10 and 11.
- Assessment is not sufficiently developed so that students know how well they are doing and how to improve.
- There are too few opportunities to use ICT, though the interactive whiteboard is well used.

Commentary

59. Results in the 2003 examinations were below average in French and well below average in German. Students performed better in their other subjects than they did in languages. These lower than expected results do, however, go against a trend of improvement up until 2002. Results in modern foreign languages in 2003 fell nationally and the department experienced

some uncertainties with regard to the demand of the new examination specifications, particularly in speaking and writing. This resulted in the students' achievement in 2003 being unsatisfactory as most gained grades below those forecast based on prior attainment. Strategies to resolve these uncertainties are in place.

60. Standards seen in both French and German, both studied as a first foreign language, are above average, which represents good achievement. Students also achieve well in their second language which they study for less time from Year 8. In Year 9 in their first language, all students speak confidently and take part in a range of reading and listening activities. Higher attaining students are able to use a range of quite complex language and adapt language creatively. They are able to tackle longer more complex reading texts. In their second language students can communicate much information across a range of topics. Most students have good grammatical awareness, understand rules and apply them in their own writing and speaking. In Year 11 standards seen in French and German are also above average, which represents good achievement. The greater awareness of teachers of the examination requirements means that higher attaining students can write at length and accurately using a wide range of vocabulary and structures about topics such as healthy living, holidays and their town. In German they can understand the main points from rapid authentic speech and in French they can reuse language from reading texts in their own speaking and writing. Middle attaining students' writing is shorter and less accurate, but they are able to use the past tense with confidence and lower attaining students can do so with support. Students speak with confidence, sometimes at length and mostly with good pronunciation.
61. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 11 in both French and German. All teachers have very good subject knowledge and use the language effectively in the classroom, providing a good model for students' own language. Teachers plan a range of activities using different skills and often including games, so that students learn at a good pace and both boys and girls contribute confidently to speaking activities. However, opportunities for the least and most able are not always sufficiently explicit. Teachers have good classroom management and students work well collaboratively, thus creating a positive attitude to languages. Marking is thorough and positive; however, the effective use of assessment, so that students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve, is not consistent. Students should also be offered more opportunities to enhance their learning through the use of ICT.
62. The study of two languages by many students and the continued study of a language to GCSE are strengths of the languages curriculum. However, the European language awareness course, offered to less able students in Years 8 and 9 in place of a second language, does not support their first language learning and the learning outcomes for these students from this course are not explicit.
63. Leadership and management in the department are good. The department works well as a team with a shared commitment to raising standards and maintaining a high profile for languages in the school. Departmental documentation is clear and supportive though there are some inconsistencies in assessment procedures. The use of data to review achievement and standards in the department requires further development. Schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 show clear progression, but those for Years 10 and 11 place insufficient emphasis on skill progression. Improvement since the last inspection is good. The quality of teaching has improved, as has achievement in Years 7, 8 and 9 and the department is much better resourced, enabling a wider range of teaching and learning activities.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and achievement is very good.

- Students benefit from the very good teaching they receive.
- Leadership is very good, providing a clear vision and high aspirations.
- The use of ICT is enhancing students' learning.
- Assessment techniques should be refined to ensure that all students know their target grades and are aware of how well they are performing in relation to their target.

Commentary

64. Results in national tests in 2003 at the end of Year 9 were well above average. Given that these students entered the school with broadly average standards in mathematics, their achievement was very good. There are no significant differences between the standards attained by boys and girls. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average. These students entered Year 10 with well above average standards, which were maintained because of the quality of teaching offered and the enthusiasm of the students. Knowledge and understanding were reinforced and extended at a very good rate; thus the students' achievement was very good. Again there were no significant differences between the standards of boys and girls.
65. For present students, standards on entry were broadly average. Work seen during the inspection confirms that standards are well above average by the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Students' work covers the range of attainment expected, with many more students working at higher levels and fewer at lower levels than is seen nationally. Standards are consistent across different aspects of mathematics and students are able to use and apply the skills they learn in number and algebra as well as in shape and space and handling data. Students learn new skills quickly and develop a very secure understanding of concepts. There are no significant differences in achievement for different groups of students or for those with special educational needs. Achievement is very good in all years.
66. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The best lessons are well planned; teachers use very good questioning to ensure all students are involved, and clear explanations of difficult ideas generate a high level of commitment and involvement from students. Teachers' knowledge and understanding are very good and some have an exceptionally clear view of difficulties and patterns of progress in mathematics. Students apply a range of mathematical skills consistently well. For example, higher attaining Year 8 students extended their work on equations to draw curved graphs and eventually they used these to solve quadratic equations. Work is equally well matched to the needs of lower attaining students, including those with special educational needs, with very well managed practical activities that provide variety and maximise students' ability to concentrate. The use of time in lessons is good, though occasionally there is little time left at the end of lessons to complete a worthwhile plenary. ICT is used well to enhance learning; the new Interactive whiteboards are being used imaginatively, for example, to enable students in Year 11 to investigate a range of geometrical theorems based on the circle. Teachers' very effective use of specialised language contributes well to literacy and communication skills. High and realistic expectations of all students have led to a climate of shared excitement and achievement and to excellent relationships. Regular assessment is used very effectively to track student progress, but guidance to students in some day-to-day marking and assessment is less effective and students are not always clear as to the level of work they are achieving.
67. Leadership is very good and the department is very well managed. There is clear vision and very high aspirations, which culminate in students attaining high standards and many enjoying their mathematical studies. Standards have risen since the last inspection and the overall level of improvement has been good. The teaching staff are an effective team and are committed to raising standards further. Provision for mathematics is a major strength of the school.

Mathematics across the curriculum

68. Standards of numeracy across the curriculum are good. The National Numeracy Strategy is used very well in mathematics lessons, and other departments have systematically planned for

the development of numeracy. In science and design and technology students were observed using mathematical skills confidently and accurately. An agreed policy has been implemented by subjects across the curriculum and this reinforces both the importance of numeracy and the specialist status of the school. There are particular strengths in data handling and measurement in a number of departments including science, design and technology and geography.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The head of science provides good leadership and management.
- The use of ICT is helping to motivate students and raise standards.
- Standards at the end of Year 9 are above the national average and well above those of similar schools.
- There is a need to raise standards in Years 10 and 11, particularly of the higher attainers.
- The quality of teaching is variable and best practice needs to be shared.
- More effective and consistent use of assessment data is needed.

Commentary

69. In 2003, test results at the end of Year 9 were above the national average, with little difference in the results of boys and girls. Students achieved well in relation to their standards in science, which were broadly average, when they entered the school. GCSE examination results in 2003 were in line with national averages, though the performance of girls was significantly higher than that of boys. Students commenced their GCSE course with above average levels of prior attainment, but many students gained lower than expected grades. Overall achievement for this cohort was unsatisfactory, though this was not in keeping with previous trends. It is important to note that these results were obtained at a time of unpredictable staff absences and before the changes introduced by the new head of department had time to have an impact.
70. For present students, based on work seen, standards by the end of Year 9 are above average and by the end of Year 11 they are average. Based on prior attainment, achievement is good in Years 7, 8 and 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. There is no significant difference in the achievement of boys and girls and students with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers. Teachers have realistically high expectations and plan lessons to meet most students' needs. There is, however, a need to focus on challenging and extending higher attaining students in Years 10 and 11.
71. By the end of Year 9, students are particularly adept at recording and analysing scientific data and they demonstrate well-developed numeracy and graphical skills. By the end of Year 11, students are skilled in confidently explaining a range of scientific concepts, using complex scientific terminology. They show high levels of initiative and are skilled in the use of ICT to enhance their learning.
72. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. It is good in Years 7, 8 and 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. In very effective lessons, teachers share the learning objectives with students and use time during, and at the end of, the lesson to consolidate learning. A variety of interesting activities is used to stimulate and interest students, who have many opportunities to participate actively in the lesson. As a result, motivation and commitment increase. Students are encouraged to work collaboratively, explore scientific ideas, think critically and apply their knowledge and understanding. In these lessons, humour and praise are used extremely effectively to encourage and support students. Expectations are high and good relationships are evident throughout. Students take a great pride in their work. Where learning is

less effective, the lessons are too teacher dominated, with less student participation. Relationships can be negative and students become demotivated. Too much time is spent trying to gain the attention of the class and dealing with churlish behaviour. The pace of lessons is slow and far too little learning takes place. A key area for development is to ensure that teaching is effective throughout the whole department.

73. A useful scheme for marking students' work has been introduced and this needs to be consistently used by all teachers. Assessment data needs to be employed more effectively to raise standards. Greater use needs to be made of National Curriculum and GCSE grade descriptors, to set targets and to ensure that students know what they need to do to improve. Students also need to have greater involvement in monitoring their own progress.
74. Leadership and management of the department are good. The head of department was appointed just over a year ago. He provides a good role model for colleagues and is already beginning to have a significant impact on raising standards. He quickly identified areas for improvement and took swift action. Developments include the introduction of a new modular scheme in Years 10 and 11 and changes in the deployment of teachers in Years 7, 8 and 9 in order to give greater continuity to students' learning. Other important developments include the identification and support of students who are underachieving, the use of ICT to aid revision and the development of new schemes of work, which are very clear and which aid lesson planning. After each modular test in Years 10 and 11, letters are sent to a number of students and parents, either praising their achievement or offering support if they are underachieving. These letters are much appreciated by students and increase their motivation.
75. A team of committed and effective technicians supports the work of the department. Although textbooks in Years 7, 8 and 9 could be usefully replaced, the department is in the positive position of being able to issue all students with their own textbooks. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is good, particularly with respect to the introduction and use of ICT.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of learning is enhanced by the quality of relationships between staff and students.
- Students with special educational needs in Years 7, 8 and 9 achieve very well because of the support they receive and the challenges that are offered.
- There has been a very good level of improvement since the last inspection.
- Better use of assessment data is needed; students need to know their target grades and their work needs to be monitored in relation to their targets.

Commentary

76. Students enter the school with different experiences in their use of ICT but, overall, their standards are average. By the end of Year 9, based on teachers' assessments, standards are above average. This represents good achievement. In 2003, a small number of students sat their GCSE examination in ICT. Numbers were too small to allow for national comparisons. Most candidates sat a short course in ICT. Again no national comparisons can be made, but the outcomes suggest that students achieved well in relation to their prior attainment in ICT.
77. Current standards in Years 7, 8 and 9 are above average. They are above average in all strands of ICT with the exception of control technology, where standards are below average. Students' achievement is good. The achievement of lower attaining students, especially those with special educational needs, is very good because they benefit from a very good choice of stimulating activities and the very good help they receive from learning support staff. Standards observed in Years 10 and 11 are also above average. Students benefit from teaching which

focuses well upon examination requirements and all are acquiring and developing a good range of ICT skills. As these students had varying experiences of ICT before entering Year 10, their achievement is good. This judgement relates to all students, including boys and girls and those with special educational needs.

78. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In Years 7, 8 and 9, where some non-specialist teachers are used, teaching is good because such staff are well supported and there is a good scheme of work. Teachers are clear about learning objectives, have high expectations and set work of a suitably challenging level. Good use is made of the interactive whiteboard and other technologies by which teachers can control students' computer screens and keep them on task. Teaching could be more focussed on the learning and consolidation of specific ICT skills rather than the completion of projects. Students' learning would also benefit if more of their work was printed and assessed. More attention could then be paid to presentation, spelling and grammar. In Years 10 and 11 teachers have a good knowledge of examination requirements and monitor students' coursework well, so that all students are aware of what they need to do to improve grades. The pace and intensity of work also benefit from the very good relationships between staff and students in all years.
79. The leadership and management of the department are good. Staff specialisms are recognised and deployed effectively, with good support given to non-specialists. For further improvements in standards to occur, students' work needs to be monitored more systematically and better use made of assessment data in setting target grades. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. More qualified staff and technicians have been appointed. There has been a considerable improvement in resources, particularly in the number of computers and interactive whiteboards. Examination courses have been introduced for all students in Years 10 and 11 and more time has been allocated to ICT in Years 7, 8 and 9. The school has also been successful in its bid to become a specialist Mathematics and Computing College.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

80. There has been satisfactory progress in the use of ICT across subjects since the last inspection. Teachers have received more training in ICT and this, together with improving resources, particularly a significant number of interactive whiteboards, is now impacting on the quality of teaching and learning in many subjects of the curriculum. For example, good work using ICT, particularly spreadsheets and research on the Internet, was witnessed in geography. Students in science use laptops for data logging, research and revision. Video technology is used to analyse performance in physical education. Developments are beginning to take place in design and technology with control technology. The use of ICT is well developed in mathematics, but less well in other subjects. The use of multi-media across subjects is limited to the use of digital cameras. The monitoring and evaluation of students' progress in their use of ICT in other subjects is an area for development.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department is very well led and managed.
- The quality of learning is very good because of the quality of teaching offered.
- Learning is further enhanced by the effective use made of ICT.
- Assessment data could be used more effectively to set all students target grades and then monitor their performance against such targets.
- Standards could be raised further by ensuring that those students with poor literacy skills are better supported.

Commentary

81. Results in the 2003 GCSE examination were above average, with girls outperforming boys in a similar way to the national pattern. Given the students' prior levels of attainment on entry to the course in Year 10, these results are indicative of very good achievement. Standards of work seen during the inspection were well above average in Years 7 to 11. Overall, students, including those with special educational needs, achieve very well in their studies of geography. Younger students are confident using geographical terms in their writing and older students at structuring their responses to examination questions. All students are confident users of ICT to record, illustrate and analyse fieldwork.
82. The quality of teaching and learning is very good overall. Teachers' expectations are high and behaviour management is always at least good. In the best lessons, there is an emphasis on teaching students how to learn. The most effective lessons have strong pace and ICT is used well to gain students' attention and suit different learning styles. Teachers are enthusiastic and lessons are planned around a range of activities. Students are almost always attentive and their confidence grows because "teachers are good at showing them how to improve". Most are aware of what level is expected of them in tests and examinations. Work is generally well suited to individual students and good use is made of individual education plans from the special needs department, but there are a small number of students with literacy difficulties who would benefit from more help with recording their work. Some students' exercise books show very good marking with the teacher's enthusiasm and encouragement coming through; this good practice should be extended.
83. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department is a good role model, for example in the use of ICT and assessment techniques, and supports teachers well in building up their skills. They are an effective team. There has been thoughtful self-evaluation and planning to ensure that standards of geography in the school are continually improving. Although data is used extensively to analyse the department's performance, it could be used better for individual target-setting and for looking at the progress of particular groups of students.
84. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good; resources have improved, especially in the use of ICT. The department is one of the most frequent users of the ICT suites. While resources have improved, there is a need to replace ageing textbooks. There is now fieldwork for all students, but with the wealth of opportunities on the doorstep, this could be more exciting and imaginative. Inadequate accommodation was mentioned in the previous inspection report. This has improved and the department now has a suite of rooms.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, and in some lessons it is very good.
- Learning is further promoted by the very good relationships that exist between staff and students.
- Very good assessment procedures are in place that include self-evaluation by students.
- Learning would benefit if time was allowed in lessons for recap sessions, so that the students' learning could be challenged and recapped.
- A more effective use of ICT in lessons could be made to support learning.

Commentary

85. GCSE results in 2003 show that standards overall are above average, but for the higher A* to C grades, standards are well above average. The results for girls were well above average. Girls normally perform better than boys. Though students started this course in Year 10 with differing standards of prior attainment, achievement overall was good, with the majority of students, including those with special educational needs, gaining grades above those forecast.
86. Present students enter Year 7 with average standards and by Year 9 standards are above average. This reflects good achievement. Students of all abilities, including those with special educational needs, demonstrate increasing skills in using sources of evidence. They show good skills when identifying the effects of the Black Death on various groups of people in medieval times. Factual knowledge about such aspects as the causes and results of the First World War is good. Less secure is the ability of students to raise questions themselves and link sources.
87. Standards in Year 11 are above average overall and are well above average for a significant minority of students. Again this reflects at least good achievement. The most competent students, including boys, have a very good knowledge and understanding of the reasons behind the popularity of the Nazi party and who supported them. In extended writing and in their coursework about China the majority of students are able to evaluate and write in good detail. There is a tendency for less able students not to back up their views with sufficient evidence. In source work the students use pictorial evidence well to evaluate the effects of the Treaty of Versailles, although less able students struggle to combine the sources with their own knowledge of events.
88. Teaching and learning are good overall with examples of very good and excellent teaching being seen. In the most effective lessons, careful teachers' planning leads to a good range of activities and resources being developed that challenge students very well. Some highly effective strategies are used that allow students to learn appropriate study and examination skills. Teachers' management skills are very good and positive relationships and learning environments are established. Students become engaged in their learning, and benefit well from some good teacher questioning that reflects a secure knowledge of the subject. A relative weakness is the use of recap sessions that offer students insufficient opportunities for reflection and do not sufficiently challenge their understanding.
89. Leadership and management are good and have resulted in good improvement since the previous inspection. The recently appointed subject manager leads a committed team who are fully supportive of the clear direction set for the subject. Policies are well written and subject planning supports rising standards. A good curriculum exists, although schemes of work need to show more clearly the delivery of the citizenship aspect of the history syllabus. There are very good assessment procedures in place, with students generally aware of their target grades and what they need to do to improve. Teachers' use of the good range of assessment data provided would be enhanced by further training in the use of such data. Homework promotes independent research using the Internet, although the use of computers during lessons is underdeveloped.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been much recent improvement in provision and this has been accompanied by improving standards.
- Very good relationships between staff and students help the quality of learning.

- The range of visits and visitors and the use of ICT need to be extended to further enrich the opportunities offered to students.

Commentary

90. The leadership of this department has changed recently and prior to September 2003 there is little information about students' standards, especially in Years 7, 8 and 9. Thus judgements on past achievement cannot be readily made. However, it would seem that on entry to the school the previous experiences of students in religious education were extremely variable and below the expectations of the Gloucestershire Agreed Syllabus. In 2003, all Year 11 students were entered for the GCSE short course. Though results were below average, no national comparative data are available for this course, so no judgements on outcomes can be made.
91. In all years standards are now rising because courses are better planned, students are better supported and more creative approaches to learning have been established. Students in Years 10 and 11 are now following a half GCSE course. Achievement in all years is good. In Years 7, 8 and 9, students commenced their studies in religious education with no better than average levels of prior attainment, but they are working at above average levels. Students in Years 10 and 11 are also working at an above average standard. One particular improvement is in the quality of students' written work.
92. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Well structured planning, taking account of students' individual needs and the effective use of resources, enables all students equal access to each topic. Skilful questioning encourages all students, including those with special educational needs, to extend their thinking and give reasons for their responses. Most students respond positively to the many opportunities for collaborative group work. Learning also benefits from the very good relationships established between staff and students. However, learning would be further enhanced by the addition of more regular visits to places of worship and speakers from different faiths to deepen the students' understanding of other religions and traditions. More use should also be made of ICT as a resource for learning.
93. Both leadership and management of the subject are good. Regular evaluation of the units of work by teachers and students assures the quality of experience and learning, whilst moderation of written tasks ensures consistency in standards. The head of subject has high aspirations, drives the vision for the subject and is a positive motivator and influencer of students and staff alike. Staff training opportunities are well targeted to the needs of individual teachers and the development of the subject. Positive values are a feature of all lessons and improvement since the last inspection has been recent, but good.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good teaching assures very high standards and very good achievement.
- The creative, presentation and graphical communication skills shown by most students are very good.
- Standards are rising because of the good leadership and management of the head of technology subjects.
- Assessment data needs to be used with consistency to ensure that all students know their targets grades, know where they are in relation to such grades and what they need to do in order to improve further.
- The application of computer programming skills is underdeveloped.

Commentary

94. Teachers' assessments show students to be attaining above national average standards by the end of Year 9 and this is confirmed by inspection evidence. In 2003 GCSE results in all aspects of design and technology were well above the average. For both groups, these outcomes represent very good achievement in relation to prior learning.
95. Students enter school with very variable experiences in designing and making and with broadly average attainment. The standards seen are above average by the end of Year 9 and reflect good achievement during Years 7, 8 and 9. Students' creative flair and imagination and making skills are good. They can work in a broad range of materials but have insufficient opportunities to work in compliant materials such as textiles. Their skills in programming a computer to manufacture a product are at a basic level and need developing further. In Years 10 and 11 standards are well above the average in both home economics and design and technology. This reflects very good achievement. Girls do better than boys generally but boys outperform boys nationally. Students with special educational needs achieve as well as their peers. All students have a good understanding of the design process and principles and can present their ideas well. Higher and average attaining students have good literacy, numeracy and graphical communication skills. Most students can research their work well using a range of sources including the internet. In students' work there is a good balance between computer-generated graphics and hand-drawn work.
96. The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good. The achievement of many students is very good because of the high level of individual support and guidance, very good lesson planning and the way lessons are controlled and organised. Students are particularly well prepared for the demands of GCSE examinations. The marking of students' work is constructive and linked well to improving their performance. Good verbal assessment features in all lessons and helps students to make progress that is good, and often very good. In Years 7, 8 and 9 students can state what National Curriculum level they are working at but they are unsure about what the levels mean, or what they need to do to secure an improvement in standards.
97. Very good leadership provides a clear direction for the subjects. There are very good accommodation and resources and these are well managed. The recently acquired computer equipment means that teachers can now implement their planned developments in computer-aided design and manufacture work. There has been a good level of improvement since the last inspection.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well because care is taken to cater for individual needs.
- Learning benefits from the consistently good teaching that is offered.
- The use of assessment data is inconsistent. Students are not always aware of their target grades, or what they need to do in order to improve the standards of their work.
- More regular use of ICT would enhance the quality of learning.

Commentary

98. In 2003, GCSE results overall were similar to those recorded nationally, though for grades A* to C, standards were above average. Given the students' levels of prior attainment, these outcomes indicate satisfactory achievement.

99. For present students in Year 9, standards are above average. This represents good achievement for the students in relation to when they started at the school in Year 7. Students raised the standard of their work by studying the action painting of Jackson Pollock; they showed understanding by dripping paint from suspended cans onto paper for timed periods. The outcomes were controlled by students and frequent changes of colour ensured that results were exciting. Standards in Year 11 are also above average. This too represents good achievement in relation to the students' prior attainment. One reason for the improvement in standards and levels of achievement is that the department is now looking more at individual needs. Thus, higher attaining students, for example, are given extra-curricular opportunities that enrich their work.
100. The quality of teaching and learning is good throughout the school. All students make progress when teaching builds on previous learning. This was seen in a Year 9 lesson where students were taught a series of techniques using paint, oil, rubber and wax. This was in preparation for paintings influenced by the work of Claus Oldenberg. Students drew a small familiar household object, enlarged it and placed it into a traditional landscape employing their newly-acquired skills. Students' learning is also enhanced when they are provided with thoughtful resources. This was seen in a number of lessons. One particular area where learning could be improved is through the use of ICT. In all years, insufficient use is made of ICT as a tool to enliven learning and offer students improved opportunities for experimentation and creativity. Assessment procedures are satisfactory but all teachers do not adhere to the same good practice. More consistency in the use of target grades is needed. Not all students know their target grades and even fewer know what they have to do in order to meet their target or exceed it. Students' attitudes are generally positive and behaviour is generally good, but when class management is weak a minority drift off task and make unsatisfactory progress.
101. Leadership and management are good overall. The head of subject has built a team determined to raise standards. Curricular development has built effectively on teachers' strengths. Management is satisfactory because the day-to-day running of the department is smooth, but not all available data is used to analyse students' performance and set targets for the future that will raise standards. Improvement since the last report is good because the scheme of work now includes opportunities to teach three-dimensional studies. It also builds well on teachers' strengths and interests and standards are rising.

Drama

Provision in drama is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well and make very good progress.
- Students respond with commitment and enthusiasm to the stimulating and challenging teaching.
- The subject is very well led and managed.
- Assessment procedures in Years 7, 8 and 9 are not well developed.

Commentary

102. The proportion of students attaining a grade in the A* to C range in the 2003 GCSE examinations was above average for boys and girls. This represents very good achievement when account is taken of the small amount of drama teaching they received in Years 7, 8 and 9. It also represents good improvement since the time of the last inspection. Results were similar to those attained in 2002.
103. Many students choose to study the subject to GCSE level. This enables them to learn from each other through lively discussions and to engage in group activities which cater for a wide

range of competencies. The work seen during the course of the inspection is above average in Years 10 and 11. Levels of achievement are very good. Students in all years work well collaboratively and are able to communicate ideas and emotions using a range of drama techniques. They have good evaluative skills. The work they do makes a significant contribution to their personal development and the issues they explore through performance contribute to their moral and social awareness.

104. Students achieve very well because of the very good teaching, which is both stimulating and challenging. Teachers are subject specialists who are able to put across their own enthusiasm for the subject. They have established very good working relationships in the classroom and ensure that students of all competencies are actively involved in preparing for and contributing to performances. There is a wide range of activities available to students beyond taught time to broaden their understanding and enjoyment of the subject.
105. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. Significant improvements have been made to the curriculum in recent years to meet students' different needs. The subject has been particularly successful, for example, in getting boys in Years 10 and 11 to perform well and attain high standards. There is a strong sense of common purpose pervading the work of the department because of the effective teamwork. Rigorous systems are in place for monitoring and evaluating the older students' work and taking appropriate action. More needs to be done, however, to ensure that the assessment of students' work in Years 7, 8 and 9 is thorough and constructive. There is the capacity to improve further on provision because teachers are self-critical and committed to professional development.

Music

Provision in music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards attained by students at the end of Year 11 are well above average.
- Students' achievement is very good as teachers make the subject interesting.
- The use of assessment data needs to be refined so that all students know their present levels and what they need to do to improve.

Commentary

106. In 2003, many students attained well above average results at GCSE. This is an improvement on standards reported at the previous inspection; 2003 results represent very good achievement. In work seen, standards for the majority of students are above average at the end of Year 9 and well above average at the end of Year 11. Students' musical ability is average at the start of Year 7. Consistently good and challenging teaching means that achievement is good for all students, including those with special educational needs, by the end of Year 9. They are familiar with and confident in using musical language, staff and graphic notation. They can identify chords and use a variety of different scale patterns in their work. Achievement is very good by the end of Year 11 because of sustained high quality teaching and knowledge of individual students' strengths and weaknesses. Students talk enthusiastically about their work; many have considerable strengths in performance.
107. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, but in Years 10 and 11 it is very good. The musical knowledge, challenge and high expectations of the staff ensure that students are involved in their work and are given interesting activities during lessons. Comprehensive information sheets often supplement these activities, so that students build up a bank of research material, especially for examination groups. Teachers' enthusiasm, combined with good working relationships, keeps all involved. At times less competent students need smaller tasks in lessons so that they do not become daunted by complex activities. Questioning is sometimes not rigorous enough and endings of lessons need to be used more effectively. The

regular written evaluations, which are marked in great detail, mean that students review and reflect on their learning and develop their literacy skills. Students learn how to express opinions and give mature and thoughtful answers when describing their work. By Years 10 and 11 they use musical language successfully when evaluating and describing their compositions. Many students are then able to discuss and illustrate concepts on their chosen instrument. Current limitations in resources mean that recording equipment is inadequate and does not allow regular detailed recordings to be made.

108. Leadership and management are good. Teamwork is strong; there is a consistency of approach, teachers support each and give freely of their time. However, there is a need to plan more strategically and have clear priorities for development. Assessment procedures are cumbersome and need to be streamlined and related more closely to National Curriculum levels. Progress made by different groups of students needs to be monitored and analysed in relation to national standards. Since the previous inspection, improvement has been good and the department provides a good musical environment for all students. Through the various ensembles and concerts, they enjoy the social opportunities of making music together in school and in the local community.

Physical education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of leadership is very good.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Examinations results are well above average.
- Students enhance their skills through very good extra-curricular provision.
- Lesson planning does not always focus on what students should learn and this constrains standards and achievement, especially in non-examination classes.
- Analysis of assessment data should better inform lesson planning and target setting.

Commentary

109. Results in the 2003 GCSE examinations were well above average. Girls and boys overall performed at the same level. Given the students' prior attainment, their achievement is very good. Standards in Year 11 core physical education are below those of GCSE students, but are in line with expectations; achievement is satisfactory. Standards in Year 9 are well above average. Given the wide range of abilities and aptitudes when the students enter the school, this outcome is indicative of very good achievement.
110. By the end of Year 9, students' knowledge, understanding and performance of dance, for example, are very good: they use basic techniques to perform travelling and leaping movements and are developing knowledge of the components of dance. Their vocabulary of dance is above average, which represents very good achievement given their limited experience of dance in their previous schools. By the end of Year 11, standards for those taking GCSE are well above average: achievement is very good and students' practical skills are well developed. They can perform basic techniques in most major sports and most can transfer these to game situations. In rugby students have very good basic handling skills and are able to use these in game situations when creating space for support runners. Activities planned by teachers do not challenge students enough in core physical education lessons. Standards and achievement are below those of examination groups. Assessment related to national standards is now planned for, but not yet implemented.
111. Teaching and learning are very good overall. In all years students benefit from very knowledgeable teachers. Teachers target the work well to the students' individual standards,

with the result that students often work with different equipment and on different tasks. Where learning is not as good, teachers do not use assessment effectively to inform students about what they need to do to improve. In Years 10 and 11 students are engaged well in a variety of interesting and challenging activities which motivate them and keep them on task. Teachers are well informed about the requirements of the courses they teach. Students are developing good independent learning skills, which enable them to take responsibility for their own work. Learning is less effective in core physical education because teachers do not set challenging tasks or assess students against national standards. A large number of students enhance their performance through a very good programme of extra-curricular sport.

112. Leadership and management are very good. The new head of department has introduced strategies which ensure that the department has a shared vision in order to raise standards more quickly. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection. Changes have been made to the curriculum in Years 7, 8 and 9; it now has more breadth and balance. Assessment systems and procedures are now in place in Years 7, 8 and 9, but have yet to have an effect on boosting standards.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

The school offers courses in GCSE business studies and applied business studies, and applied leisure and tourism. Both applied courses are the equivalent of two qualifications at GCSE. Students who choose the work related option take both applied courses and benefit from the central focus on business that is a feature of both courses. Three lessons in leisure and tourism were observed. Provision is good and students achieve well. The high level of support enables students with special educational needs to participate fully and the varied and interesting approach to learning ensures that students progress well. Teaching was good in the lessons observed and students clearly enjoyed the role-play and food tasting activities that helped them to learn about customer care and consumer choice.

Business studies

Provision in business studies is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards were well above average in 2003 in the GNVQ Intermediate course and they are above average in Year 11 GCSE classes.
- Teaching and learning are good and resources have been developed well.
- The department is very well led and management is good.
- Staff should be more vigilant in tackling some restless behaviour from Year 10 students.

Commentary

113. In 2003, results in GNVQ Intermediate were well above average and six students were awarded distinctions. The department now teaches the single GCSE and the applied double award courses and candidate numbers have increased considerably. There was no evidence of differing achievement between boys and girls during the inspection. Standards are above those found nationally and this represents good achievement as the subject attracts students from a wide range of attainment. Students with special educational needs are achieving well as a result of the quality of available support and the effective use of available ICT resources.
114. Attitudes are good overall although some students are restless and noisy at times and teachers do not always make their expectations about work and behaviour in Year 10 clear enough. Students in Year 11 work hard in lessons and during the inspection the applied group responded well to revision tasks planned for them. Most students have good ICT skills because of the good resources available. Course work is managed very well and is an area of real

strength as students are producing high quality course work that will greatly enhance their final grades. Year 11 students understand about business planning and use case studies well. The highest attaining students can explain the difference between fixed and variable costs although lower and average attaining students find this more difficult. Year 10 students on the applied course show a good level of understanding of the environmental factors that affect a large retail store and this, like many aspects of the course, makes a major contribution to their understanding of citizenship issues. In another lesson, on employment law, students learned about key legislation such as the Race Relations Act of 1976.

115. Teachers have a thorough knowledge of the subject and experience in business that provides real examples from the business world. The department has good quality resources and they are well used although more use could be made of the new interactive whiteboard. Assessment is very thorough and good use is made of available data including information about students with special educational needs.
116. The good quality of teaching and learning is a result of the very good leadership that has enabled the department to expand quickly while maintaining high standards. Management is good; curriculum and resource development have been prioritised so that all students can achieve well. The applied GCSE course has been planned very effectively and the department is developing more links with local business and industry to extend resources for learning. The subject was not reported on in the previous inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

117. The school recognises that it has been slow to implement the requirements for this subject. Currently there is no scheme of work and standards of work attained by students at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were not reported to parents. Following departmental audits, the school decided to teach citizenship across all subjects. This means that individual departments have identified elements of the citizenship curriculum in their planning. However, in practice there is considerable inconsistency between departments and, as a result, there is no clear monitoring of what is being taught to whom. During the inspection, even where teachers had identified citizenship elements in their lesson planning, this was not made clear during the actual lessons. As a result few students are aware of citizenship, or can give clear explanation of the meaning of the subject.
118. During the inspection, no teaching of citizenship was seen and the school was unable to provide any other evidence. Generally teaching and learning are through oral discussion and debate so students do not have any written evidence of their work. There is, at present, no method of assessing and recording students' achievement and standards and reporting this information to parents. Citizenship has a low priority in the school and this needs to be rectified urgently. A system is needed to monitor the quality of teaching and learning to ensure a consistent approach and to provide training and specialist resources for staff where needed.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002, the latest year for which national comparisons are available.

Level 3 GCE A-level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Biology	10	100	91.6	20	36.3	78	74.1
Business Studies	7	100	96.4	28.6	32.8	80	76.5
Chemistry	5	100	94	20	45.9	64	81.1
Drama	6	100	98.1	50	41.5	96.7	82.9
English Literature	15	100	98.5	53.3	43.7	97.3	84.3
General Studies	38	100	90.1	42.1	29.1	80.5	69.3
Geography	5	100	97.1	80	40.5	98	80.9
German	5	100	96.3	80	44.3	100	82.1
History	11	100	97.1	45.5	41	83.6	81.2
Information Technology	11	100	89.1	27.3	22.4	76.4	64.1
Mathematics	11	100	93.3	27.3	22.4	96.4	84.7
Other Social Studies	9	88.9	94.3	33.3	38.9	66.7	77.7
Physics	6	100	92.8	66.7	42.8	103.3	78.6

Level 3 GCE AS-level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
General Studies	8	100	78.6	12.5	25.7	33.8	30
Information Technology	12	66.7	78.2	8.3	20.6	22.5	28.5
Mathematics	9	66.7	74.2	22.2	34.3	26.7	31.3

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus was on English and French. One lesson of German in Year 12 was observed; teaching and learning were very good. The teacher's very good subject knowledge, including examination requirements, ensured that students gained confidence in their listening skills and were able to tackle a range of tasks after listening to rapid and authentic spoken German.

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and students achieve very well.
- Students are motivated and enjoy the subject because of the stimulating and challenging teaching.
- Too few males are choosing to study the subject in the sixth form.

Commentary

119. English literature is taught as a one year AS-level course and as an A-level course over two years. The subject is very popular with female students although a few able and committed males choose to study the subject each year. A more equitable gender balance would improve the quality of students' educational experience in discussion and group work.
120. Students attained well above average results in the 2002 AS-level and A-level examinations and their levels of achievement were very good. Students performed equally well in the 2003 examinations. Such high standards have been the norm over recent years and they represent an improvement on what was attained at the time of the last inspection.
121. The work seen during the course of the inspection was well above average in quality and students continue to achieve very well. This is a reflection of the very good teaching that is offered. Those in Year 12 are developing a personal approach in their interpretation of the set texts and are reading widely to broaden their understanding of the context in which writers work. Students' analytical skills are highly developed by Year 13 and their critical writing is well informed and succinct. Students are attaining such standards because of the very good teaching, which is both stimulating and challenging. Teachers have the ability to put across their own enthusiasm for the subject and to motivate students to become independent and self-reliant in their studies.
122. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. Teachers work closely as a team and have high aspirations for the students. There is a strong sense of common purpose and a commitment to improving further the quality of provision through on-going professional development. Effective systems are in place for evaluating the subject's performance and for informing teachers about the quality of their work and how to improve. They speak highly about the advice and guidance they receive. There have been good improvements since the last inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

123. Provision for the development of key skills in language and literacy across the curriculum is good. There is evidence in subjects like English that students are encouraged to use literacy skills to improve the quality of their written work and oral discussions. When this happens such skills support their learning and enable them to achieve well in their examination courses.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge and planning ensure that students achieve well.
- Teaching methods enthuse students and provide opportunities for speaking and independent learning, including the use of ICT.
- Learning strategies are constrained because group sizes are too small in both Years 12 and 13.

Commentary

124. In both 2002 and 2003, students achieved their predicted grades, but numbers taking the examination in both years were too small to make national comparisons. Group size in the current Year 13 is still small; however, standards seen during the inspection were above average overall. There is a range of ability in both Years 12 and 13 and achievement is good overall; for some students it is very good. In Year 12 students have good listening skills and understand both rapid instructions and taped material. They respond to a range of authentic French texts and have produced accurate and well-structured writing tasks, covering different topics. In Year 13, students speak with confidence and fluency when expressing opinions. Their writing includes a range of complex language and idiomatic expressions, covering political, social, environmental and cultural issues in France. Students respond to a range of authentic texts, using summary, note taking and transfer of meaning.
125. Standards of teaching and learning are very good. Teachers' very good subject knowledge and knowledge of the examination requirements help to prepare students across the ability range to achieve success. They use a range of strategies and activities to ensure that students learn new language, practise and reinforce their language skills. Consequently, all students are highly motivated, with very positive attitudes to language learning. Grammar activities are very well integrated into topic areas, so that students can use a range of language in speaking and writing with accuracy. However, the small size of groups inhibits discussion work. Very good use of assessment and knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses ensure that all students have appropriate targets and support. Marking is very informative and students use comments effectively to improve their work. Teachers provide opportunities to work independently, in particular using ICT for research.
126. Leadership and management are good. Teachers collaborate well, supported by a good scheme of work so that students are very clear about what they are learning and when. However, there is a need to develop strategies to encourage a bigger uptake in the sixth form. Improvement since the last inspection is good with particular improvements in teaching and learning, however groups are still small.

MATHEMATICS

The department offers a combination of modules to students in Year 12 and 13, which can lead to qualifications ranging from a single AS-level through to two A-levels in mathematics and further mathematics. The whole provision was the focus of this inspection.

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good subject knowledge of the staff ensures high standards.
- The curriculum is very good as the department uses modular options very well to offer students a range of mathematical options.
- Very good achievement results from the very good teaching that is offered.
- Students should be offered more opportunities to use ICT.

Commentary

127. In 2002 A-level results were well above average. All students achieved at least a pass grade, with over 60 per cent achieving either an A or B grades. Achievement for this group was very good as they successfully built on their prior attainment. The large number of students

choosing mathematics allows a wide variety of module combinations to be offered. This succeeds in meeting the needs of students with differing requirements.

128. Standards of work seen during the inspection were well above average. In Year 13 students confidently used the chain rule when differentiating functions and were able to work at a very good pace. In Year 12 students quickly grasped the principles of conditional probability in statistics and tackled examination questions with confidence. Achievement is very good for all students.
129. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have a very good grasp of their subject at this level; they anticipate the areas that students might find difficult and plan their resources to overcome these obstacles. The use of the interactive whiteboard in teaching statistics was very effective, though students themselves make less use of ICT. The relationship between students and teachers is very good. Students are prepared to seek help from their teachers when needed. Discussion work is also very good with lessons often featuring lively debates about how to solve problems and which solutions to use. Students keep effective notes and worked examples.
130. Leadership and management are very good. The A-level teaching is shared amongst a number of staff, ensuring that expertise is maximised and maintained. There is good communication between staff, who are very supportive of one another and work well as a team. Students' work is monitored and evaluated effectively. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

Mathematics across the curriculum

131. In the sixth form the use of numeracy and the level of skills in handling mathematical data are at least good in many subjects. In all science subjects, students had competent mathematical skills and handled data well. There was good use of data in business studies. Students who do not achieve a higher grade at GCSE in Year 11 are encouraged to continue with the study of mathematics in the sixth form and good provision is made for these students, but there is no specific numeracy key skills qualifications offered in the sixth form.

SCIENCE

A-level biology was the focus of this inspection, although chemistry and physics are also taught at A-level. Sampling of the work in physics and chemistry took place. The A-level physics results in 2002 were very high compared to the national average; indeed, they were in the top five per cent of results nationally. A Year 12 lesson was characterised by high expectations and challenging work and students rose to this challenge. The A-level chemistry results in 2002 were well below the national average. In a Year 13 chemistry lesson, students had positive attitudes towards their work, but there was a distinct lack of pace and challenge.

Biology

Provision in biology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are very good.
- Teaching is very good, with teachers demonstrating excellent subject knowledge.
- Students are committed to their work, with a strong desire to succeed.
- Both independent and collaborative work are very well developed.
- The development of schemes of work needs to be continued.

Commentary

132. The standards achieved in A-level biology examinations in 2002 were above the national average. All students obtained a pass grade, with a fifth gaining either A or B grades. There was no significant difference in the achievement of male and female students. Students enter the sixth form with average levels of attainment and, therefore, these results represent good achievement. The A-level results for 2003 indicate that most students did as well as, or better than, their predicted grades, which were based on their prior attainment in Year 11. The AS-level results were more variable. The standard of work seen during the inspection was above average and students achieved well in their lessons. Retention of students from Year 12 to Year 13 is very good.
133. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently very good and students are highly motivated to achieve their very best. They are confident in their teachers, who have excellent subject knowledge and are able to challenge the students and extend their thinking. Lessons are characterised by high expectations and a range of stimulating activities. Good humour prevails in lessons and students clearly enjoy their work. They are continuously encouraged and supported, so that their confidence grows.
134. Students in Years 12 and 13 are very skilled in carrying out practical work and in handling the mathematical and biochemical aspects of the subject. In one very good lesson, students worked independently and used ICT to investigate the factors affecting the rates of transpiration in plants. Then, they worked collaboratively in pairs to carry out further research and present their results to the rest of the class. This active participation in teaching and learning produced an excellent response from everyone. In another very good, well-planned lesson, students gained a thorough understanding of the structure and replication of DNA, as a result of their participation in a wide range of practical and theoretical activities.
135. Leadership and management of the subject by the head of biology and the head of department are very good. There is a notable spirit of co-operation and a united vision about future developments. They communicate effectively with each other about curriculum content, so that students are made very aware of the links between different aspects of the subject. There is a clear focus on raising attainment and on stimulating interest in biology, so that the number of students choosing the subject is at least maintained. Schemes of work are currently being improved and developed; this work needs to continue. A residential field study and links with higher education all serve to improve the quality of students' experience and raise their aspirations. Students are carefully monitored, using data on their current and prior attainment, and appropriate support is provided. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching fosters very good learning and students' achievement is very good.
- Learning is further enhanced by the expertise offered by staff and their enthusiasm and commitment.
- For standards to rise further, more attention needs to be paid to the requirements of the written examinations.

Commentary

136. Results in the 2002 A-level examination were above average and similar results were gained in the 2003 examinations, though national comparisons for these results are not possible. Based on the students' prior levels of attainment, the 2002 results indicate good achievement.
137. The ICT curriculum has now changed and the department offers both GNVQ and AVCE qualifications. Both courses were seen during the inspection. In both courses students were

producing work of an above average standard. As many of them had very little prior knowledge of ICT when they commenced their courses, their achievement is very good and all have benefited from the very good specialist teaching provided.

138. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. The teaching is organised so that the teachers are able to use their differing specialist knowledge in completing elements of the course. Staff have produced very good materials to assist learning. Students are enthusiastically engaged in the completion of practical tasks which relate to the everyday use of ICT. They work well together and have very good relationships with their teachers. The whole department is benefiting from the improvement in the provision of resources. Whilst the completion of coursework is a strength of the work seen, for standards to rise further more attention needs to be given the requirements of the written examinations.
139. Leadership and management are very good. Recently appointed staff work well together and have enlivened the work, which has resulted in rising standards. Staff expertise is utilised to create a very positive and creative atmosphere which enables students' learning to prosper. No judgement about improvement since the previous inspection can be made as ICT did not feature last time, but the department has good plans for developing current provision.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good and often very good teaching challenges students' learning and results in high standards and good levels of achievement.
- Learning is further enhanced by the positive and enthusiastic attitudes of the students.
- The very good quality of assessment and teacher feedback contributes to high standards.
- The use of ICT in lessons could be exploited more effectively.

Commentary

140. Results in A-level examinations were above average in 2002. This represents good achievement as most students gained grades higher than those predicted. Unvalidated A-level results for 2003 indicate that the standards reached in 2002 have been at least maintained.
141. For present students in Year 12, standards are above average with the students able to draw well on their good knowledge and understanding of Henry VIII's foreign policy. More able students give concise and focused explanations when evaluating the effectiveness of foreign policy. They back up their arguments with sufficient evidence. Students react positively to the good opportunities provided to discuss issues and oral standards are good. Current Year 13 students demonstrate above average standards in their source work, such as when asked to comment on Nazi youth policy and propaganda. More able students analyse the evidence carefully and are able to draw conclusions that are relevant and suitably backed up by their own knowledge of events. Other students often show difficulty in achieving this balance between sources and own knowledge. Less able students tend to write essays that are descriptive rather than analytical, and include insufficient evidence to back up their arguments. Most students plan and write essay answers with clear introductions and are able to develop coherent and detailed answers. ICT is used well for research homework, though there is insufficient use of computer technology during lessons. Present sixth form students are achieving well in relation to their prior knowledge.

142. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall, but in some lessons it is very good. Good learning results from experienced teaching that is well focused on the need to challenge students. Teachers know their subject well and understand the different learning needs of the students. Their questions probe the students' understanding well. However, on occasions the teacher could revisit or involve others in deeper testing of the knowledge and understanding of students. Students are keen and the positive relationships which exist in lessons contribute to the quality of learning. Students benefit from very good assessment procedures, they know their target grades and are appreciative of the very good teacher feedback they receive. Whilst lesson planning is good overall there is a need for more careful use of photocopied materials to challenge students further.
143. Leadership and management are good and ensure good teaching, learning and achievement. The quality of the curriculum is very good. Teamwork within the subject is strong with a clear commitment to improvement. Monitoring of standards is carried out very effectively and appropriate attention is given to the professional development of colleagues. Provision has improved since the last inspection.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

144. During the inspection two lessons in design and technology were sampled. The work of three students was analysed and discussed. Lessons showed good attainment and good achievement by the students. Good teaching effectively enables students to communicate ideas well using computers, hand-drawn sketches and models. Students understand the design process and use it effectively to plan and evaluate their work. No subjects were inspected in depth.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching through experimentation and discovery challenges students and raises standards.
- Effective tutorial sessions let students know how well they are doing and how to improve their work.
- The use of ICT as a tool to extend learning needs to be developed.

Commentary

145. In 2002 the numbers taking the A-level examination were small and national comparisons are not statistically valid. Standards in the current Years 12 and 13 are average. The students concerned are achieving well.
146. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Students on the AS-level course quickly learnt how to tackle the geometric aspects of figure drawing when using construction lines and silhouettes. The teaching was good because it consisted of a running commentary that told students to be prepared to 'readjust', 'find your own way to solve the problem' and 'you must get out of the comfort zone so that you can explore everything that you are capable of doing'. The use of ICT plays a prominent part in word processing and researching on the Internet but students do not yet have the opportunity to manipulate images as part of their A-level studies. Homework is set regularly, which develops independent learning.
147. The leadership and management of art are satisfactory. A recent change of examination board is more appropriate to the needs of the students and the strengths of the teachers and this is

helping the students to attain better standards. Course retention rates are very good and the numbers recruited on to the sixth form courses are rising. Extra-curricular provision is good and many students spend extra time in the department when space is available. Improvement since the last report is good because standards are rising and students are able to use all the formal elements of art effectively to express their creative ideas.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are well motivated and achieve very well.
- Standards are enhanced by the students' commitment to extra-curricular sporting activities.
- Knowledgeable and enthusiastic teaching results in very good learning.
- The lack of specialist classroom provision hampers the teaching of theoretical aspects of the course.

Commentary

148. The department offers AS and A-level courses in Sports/PE studies. The number of candidates who sat their A-level examination in 2002 was too small to allow national comparisons on standards to be made. The unvalidated data for 2003 show results that were well above the national standard for 2002. This continues a trend of consistently high standards. In relation to the students' prior attainment, the results gained in 2003 represent very good achievement.
149. Standards seen in the current Year 13 are well above average and students are achieving very well. Standards are higher in Year 13 than in Year 12, where students are achieving well. Female students' achievement is in line with that of males in their group. Students have a very good knowledge and understanding of anatomy and physiology and mechanics of movement and can relate this to the performance of themselves and others. They respond to written questions clearly, evaluating data, making judgements and supporting their answers with reason. Students research and select information and can present it fluently in written and oral form. Students have good communication and group skills. Most students enhance their personal performance through participation in extra-curricular activities.
150. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject. Work is very well structured and planned to address all aspects of the syllabus and to develop students' knowledge, understanding and skills. Students are engaged well in a variety of challenging activities, which motivates them and keeps them on task. Learning is enhanced by the development of key skills, which enables students to deal with the varied learning styles and high expectations of the teachers. Students are encouraged to discuss in groups and are confident to analyse, assess and review the practical performance of others. Students benefit from the support and guidance they receive from the teachers. They value the accessibility of their teachers beyond the timetabled lessons.
151. Leadership and management are very good. There is a clear vision, which is focused on raising standards. The department does not have a base classroom for theory lessons but has good systems for managing movement of resources. The lack of specialist classroom accommodation constrains staff in the methods they can use for teaching some of the theoretical aspects of the course. Students are closely monitored and their achievements analysed. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

BUSINESS

152. No subjects were inspected in depth, but two business studies lessons were sampled. In both cases teaching and learning were satisfactory and students were achieving at levels appropriate to their prior attainment.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

No subjects were inspected in depth or sampled.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

The school offers AS and A-level examinations in general studies but no work was sampled during the inspection. However, general studies is a central part of the sixth form enrichment programme and most students in Years 12 and 13 take the AS and A-level examination. The subject is taught by a team of eight staff and there is a wide variety of content and delivery including visiting speakers and debates as well as seminar lessons on the core syllabus.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

