

INSPECTION REPORT

KENILWORTH SCHOOL AND SPORTS COLLEGE

Kenilworth

LEA area: Warwickshire

Unique reference number: 125747

Headteacher: Dr A Begbie

Lead inspector: Mr M Beale

Dates of inspection: 1 – 5 March 2004

Inspection number: 264018

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 to 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	1686
School address:	Leyes Lane Kenilworth Warwickshire
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Richard Selwyn
Date of previous inspection:	27 April 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is a large comprehensive school, with a large sixth form of 340 students, serving the town of Kenilworth. The overall roll has increased by 150 since the last inspection and the sixth form has over 50 more students. Currently there are 100 more boys than girls, this being most marked in Year 11. The vast majority of the pupils are from white-British backgrounds with no other minority ethnic groups represented in significant numbers. The number of pupils with English as an additional language is higher than average, but only five are at an early stage of learning English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is close to the national average, and the attached unit for pupils with a hearing impairment currently caters for four pupils. There are seven main primary feeder schools in a natural pyramid. Attainment on entry data for the current intake, based on their Year 6 National Curriculum test results, is well above average. Similarly, attainment on entry to the sixth form is well above average. The proportion of the pupils who are eligible for a free school meal is well below the national average and the socio-economic census data for local wards is highly favourable. The school has specialist Sports College status and there is a community sports centre on site run by the District Council. It received a Schools Achievement Award in 2000 for improvements in examination results and Sportsmark Gold in 2001.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
19385	Martin Beale	Lead inspector	Mathematics (sixth form)
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32583	Deborah Thompson	Team inspector	English
32973	Zita McCormick	Team inspector	Mathematics (11-16)
15079	Tony Boys	Team inspector	Science Biology (sixth form)
8052	Ken McKenzie	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (11-16) Business studies (sixth form)
8096	Nigel File	Team inspector	Religious education Geography (sixth form) Sociology (sixth form)
33015	Richard Winter	Team inspector	Geography (11-16) History (11-16)
18261	Tony Hill	Team inspector	Art and design
31705	John Mason	Team inspector	Music
31345	Kay Arthur	Team inspector	Design and technology
25748	Roger Moyle	Team inspector	Physical education
12408	Alan Frith	Team inspector	French German (11-16)
28002	Sue Taylor	Team inspector	Citizenship Special educational needs English as an additional language
4126	Clive Parsons	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (sixth form)
1795	Joyce Sanderson	Team inspector	English (sixth form) History (sixth form) Theatre studies (sixth form)
7871	Jean Mackie	Team inspector	Chemistry (sixth form) Physics (sixth form)
3390	Ken Thomas	Team inspector	Psychology (sixth form) Sociology (sixth form)
15365	Hayden Abbott	Team inspector	Spanish (11-16)

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This effective school provides good value for money. Its success is based on much very good teaching and the high motivation of the overwhelming majority of the pupils. Achievement is very good. The pupils make significant progress in most subjects and overall standards are well above average at GCSE and A Level.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The high proportion of good teaching inspires the pupils to do well.
- The pupils' positive approach to their studies, their good behaviour and regular attendance all contribute considerably to their academic progress and personal development.
- Recent appointments to senior management have begun to provide rigour and direction to the work of staff, but this is not supported by systematically implemented procedures to review the work of the school and plan for its improvement.
- Teaching and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in subjects does not meet National Curriculum requirements and there are shortcomings in provision for citizenship.
- The Sports College is already having a significantly beneficial impact on the life of the school, the experiences of large numbers of pupils and their participation in sporting activities.
- Pupils participate in large numbers in the wide range of extra-curricular and other enrichment activities.

The school has successfully raised standards from what was already a strong position at the last inspection in 1998. Teaching has also improved considerably. However, overall improvement since the last inspection is only satisfactory. This is because although some of the identified shortcomings have been tackled successfully, others have received insufficient attention. The teaching week has been lengthened and greater consistency brought to managing behaviour. Weaknesses in art and design, music and religious education (in Years 10 and 11) have been eliminated, but significant problems remain in ICT. Similarly, while some managers have taken on a greater leadership role, their effectiveness and the implementation of systems to review the work of staff and plan for the school's development remain inconsistent. The role of the form tutor has also not developed as much as might have been expected in six years. There have been other significant improvements. Substantial funding was secured to construct the sports centre and specialist sports college status has also been obtained.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Key: A - well above average; B – above average; C – average; D – below average; E – well below average

For Year 11, similar schools are those whose pupils attained similarly at the end of Year 9.

The A grade puts the school's GCSE performance in the top five per cent of similar schools.*

Achievement is very good overall, and is better in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form than in Years 7 to 9. Pupils make very good progress during their time in the school from already well above average standards on entry. There is no significant difference in achievement by gender or by ethnicity. The standard of work in Years 7 to 9 is above average overall, and national test results are well above average in each of English, mathematics and science. Standards improve and are well above average in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. GCSE results in virtually all subjects exceeded the national average in 2003. Standards in English and mathematics are well above average throughout the school and are above average in science. Provision for ICT remains a weakness and although standards are average this is much lower than in other subjects. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good, as it is for gifted and talented pupils. The very small number of pupils with English as an additional language make very good progress in their language development.

The pupils' personal development, including their moral, social and cultural development is good. Their spiritual development is satisfactory. They have positive attitudes and behave well in lessons and around the school. This makes for a harmonious environment in which they thrive. Attendance is above average and most pupils are regularly punctual to school and to lessons.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. Teaching is good overall and is more effective from Year 10 upwards than in Years 7 to 9. The curriculum is satisfactory and the current review is appropriately focusing on broadening pathways for all from the start of Year 10. It has strengths in the breadth offered to pupils who can study three languages, but the promotion is patchy of key aspects that are being taught or developed across subjects such as citizenship and ICT. The pupils' learning benefits considerably from the effective partnerships that have been established with parents, the local community and other institutions, including those for higher education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher, recently joined by two new and highly effective deputies, continues to be a strong driving force within the school. The successful bids for lottery funding and sports college status have considerably enhanced opportunities and the facilities at the school. Middle managers are now being held to account for standards in their areas, but not all have comfortably taken on the increased leadership role required of them. School planning has improved but lacks a long-term overview of the school's direction. Governors support and challenge the school to improve but have not ensured that National Curriculum requirements are met for ICT, citizenship and religious education in the sixth form. The school also still does not comply with requirements for a daily act of worship.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are largely happy with the school and what it provides for their children. They judge that their children are making good progress but do not always feel fully informed about how well their children are getting on, a matter not substantiated by inspection evidence. Pupils feel that it is a good school and have reasonably positive views about many aspects but also some concerns about behaviour that are not wholly supported by the inspection.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- ensure that ICT is used consistently as a tool to enhance teaching and learning;
- establish a clear strategic direction for the school's development and resource allocation, including staffing, over the next few years;
- increase the effectiveness with which all managers fulfil their leadership roles including introducing efficient systems to review and improve the work of staff and the school (as required by the last inspection);

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- for teaching ICT and for the use of ICT in subjects;
- for citizenship;
- for religious education in the sixth form;
- for collective worship.

THE SIXTH FORM AT THE KENILWORTH SCHOOL AND SPORTS COLLEGE

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a very good sixth form. It provides good cost-effectiveness, although some groups in Year 13 are small. It caters very well for the students who stay on by offering a wide range of A Level courses. The students are keen and mostly highly motivated. They are intellectually engaged with the work on their courses. This, along with the high quality of much of the teaching accounts for the students' very good achievement and the well above average standards. The Castle site (the sixth form centre) is well organised and has an atmosphere and ethos that is conducive to high standards. Improvements in provision and overall standards since the last inspection are good.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The well above average A Level results represent at least good progress for most students from their earlier GCSE results.
- Students have achieved particularly well over the last three years in business studies, psychology, sociology, design and technology, physics, art and design and economics but have not done as well as they should in chemistry and English (combined).
- Confidently taught and challenging lessons from teachers who have a high level of subject expertise move the students' learning forward at rapid pace.
- The wide range of enrichment activities strongly supports the students' personal development.
- The limited range of vocational courses is in part because pathways have not been planned from Year 10 for students who might benefit.
- The school is not meeting statutory requirements for the teaching of religious education to all students.

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	Provision for English is very good. Achievement is very good and standards are well above average because of challenging teaching and highly motivated students. Provision for French is good. Students achieve well and reach above average standards as the result of good teaching and learning.
Mathematics	Provision for mathematics is good. Standards are well above average. Achievement is good because much of the teaching inspires the students.
Science	Provision for biology is good. Satisfactory standards and achievement result from good teaching and very positive student attitudes. Provision for chemistry is satisfactory. A Level results were below average in 2003; current achievement is satisfactory and standards are average. Provision for physics is good. Satisfactory teaching and learning are leading to sound achievement and above average standards.
Information and communication technology	Provision for ICT is unsatisfactory. A Level results were well below average in 2003. Many lessons are now taught well but the legacy of poor management impacts adversely on standards.

Humanities	<p>Provision for geography is satisfactory. A Level results were average in 2003. Achievement is sound and the students co-operate well.</p> <p>Provision for history is very good. Standards are well above average and student achievement is very good because they are highly motivated by much expert teaching.</p> <p>Provision for psychology is good. Enthusiastic teaching is promoting positive attitudes, good achievement and above average standards.</p> <p>Provision for religious education is very good. Standards are well above average and achievement is very good because teaching is challenging.</p> <p>Provision for sociology is very good. Students achieve very well and standards are well above average. Challenging and expert teaching is extending the students' learning.</p>
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	<p>Provision for design and technology is very good. Challenging teaching motivates the students who attain well above average examination results.</p>
Visual and performing arts and media	<p>Provision for art and design is very good. A Level results are well above average because students respond well to the very good teaching.</p> <p>Provision for theatre studies is satisfactory. Students achieve well in response to very good teaching but examination results are below average.</p> <p>Provision for music is good. Teaching is good and the students achieve well because of their very good attitudes.</p>
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	<p>Provision for physical education is good. Very good teaching is enabling students to achieve well; standards are improving and are above average.</p>
Business	<p>Provision for business studies and economics is very good. The students' high commitment and very good teaching produces well above average standards and examination results.</p>

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

The students benefit from good support, advice and guidance particularly in preparing them for higher education. Recently introduced procedures to use data to identify students causing concern provide a valuable extension to the role of the form tutor; however, they are not being used consistently by all subject staff. Students joining from other schools feel welcome.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are good. There is a clear strategic direction for the development of sixth form provision, and the work of staff is monitored with increasing rigour. The Castle site runs smoothly for the benefit of the students. Data is being used with increasing effect to set targets, evaluate progress and identify action to be taken to eliminate weaknesses.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Sixth form students are very happy with the school. Most, but not all, value the support and guidance they receive and feel that their views are welcomed on important matters. They also appreciate the support that they receive from their individual teachers and form tutors.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Examination and test results over time show continuing high standards and an improving trend. Achievement is good at the end of Year 9. It is very good by the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form. Standards in English and mathematics are well above average and are above average in science.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Test and examination results are well above average when compared with national results and very high in comparison with those achieved in similar schools.
- National Curriculum test results for students in Year 9 have risen at a faster rate than nationally since the last inspection.
- Pupils achieve very well in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form because of very good teaching and high expectations.
- Unsatisfactory provision in ICT limits achievement for those not following either the GCSE courses in Years 10 and 11 or the Year 13 A Level course.

Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	36.6 (35.7)	33.4 (33.3)
mathematics	40.5 (37.9)	35.4 (34.7)
science	37.4 (35.8)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 267 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. Year 9 test results are well above average and the challenging target of 90 per cent of pupils to reach Level 5 or above was met in 2003 in English, exceeded in mathematics and marginally missed in science. This represents good progress from the pupils' test results in Year 6. Results in each subject and overall have been well above average for the last three years. They have risen at a faster rate than nationally, from a position that was already substantially above average. Significant numbers of pupils attain the higher Level 6 and a particularly successful feature of the 2003 results was that nearly half of the pupils achieved Level 7 or above in mathematics. This demonstrates the school's successful work with more able pupils. There have been some differences in performance by boys and girls over the past few years but overall performance by gender very much reflects the national picture, with performance in mathematics and science being similar, but girl's results being higher in English.
2. Overall achievement in Years 7 to 9 is good because of good teaching. It is very good in English, mathematics, geography and history and satisfactory in art and design, religious education and Spanish. The school is evaluating the progress of groups and individuals so that support can be better focused to prevent underachievement. For example, a

group of Year 8 boys who are making insufficient progress and appearing most frequently within the school's behaviour management system is being targeted for additional challenge.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	68 (62)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	95 (92)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	96 (93)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	40.9 (38.9)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 270 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

- GCSE results are also well above average and have risen in line with the national average, although there was a fall from 2000 to 2002, followed by a rise in 2003. The proportion of students achieving five or more A*-C grades was well above the national average throughout this period. However, the proportion of pupils who achieved no passes was similar to the national average and is above that in similar schools. This is because a small number of pupils followed accreditation routes other than GCSE. Girls have achieved better overall results than boys and, apart from in 2002, by a greater margin than nationally. The 2003 results represented continued good progress overall for pupils from their earlier Year 9 test results. The overall GCSE performance target was achieved in 2003. All subjects achieved above average results in 2003 with the exception of drama. Pupils performed particularly well in ICT, physics and religious education in both 2002 and 2003, but relatively weakly in English, science and Spanish in both years. Achievement is very good in Years 10 and 11 as a result of high expectations and very good, well focused teaching.
- The pupils' literacy and numeracy levels are well above average and used to good effect in subjects across the curriculum. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well in lessons and often very well in relation to the objectives set in their statements. The small number of pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language frequently make good progress with speaking and writing English, although many do not take public examinations as they attend the school for relatively short periods of time. Basic ICT skills are also good, but deficiencies in resources, the curriculum and the lack of use across subjects limit their further development.

Sixth form

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	95.9 (94.4)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	48.1 (48.6)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per pupil	317.0 (328.1)	253.1 (254.5)

There were 152 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

- The total average points score for students entered for advanced level courses has been well above the national average for the last three years. Female students achieve slightly better results than male students, matching the national picture. Results in individual

subjects also tend to be above or well above the national results. The exceptions to this in 2003 were in chemistry and PE where results were below average and drama and ICT where results were well below average. English language results have only been average for the last two years. In 2003 students made very good progress from their previous GCSE results in business, product design, psychology and sociology, but poor progress in chemistry. Averaged over the last three years, progress has also been very good in general studies, art and design, economics and German. Leisure and recreation results were also above average in 2002 but there were too few students in 2003 for a valid comparison to be made.

- Standards seen during the inspection are above or well above course expectations in most subjects, except in chemistry where they are in line and ICT where they are below. Very good teaching, based on what is sometimes excellent subject expertise and a thorough understanding of syllabus and examination requirements, supports these very high standards and very good achievement by the students. Students demonstrate effective study skills and the ability to work independently. They have very well developed skills in literacy and numeracy and use these well in subjects to research and present their ideas and to solve problems. There is much access to ICT to support research and presentation and good provision for students to broaden their skills through the key skills programme, but these skills are not sufficiently used to support learning across their subjects. Sixth form pupils with special educational needs are very well integrated and achieving highly.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Provision for pupils' attitudes, values and personal development is good. Behaviour is good overall. Attendance in this school year is good, and the rate of unauthorised absence similar to most schools. Almost all pupils arrive punctually in the mornings.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' attitudes to school are good, but the school misses opportunities to capitalise on pupils' keen readiness to take on further responsibilities.
- Attendance is above average and pupils are punctual to school and to lessons.
- The behaviour of the majority of pupils is very good.
- Teaching promotes high levels of personal development, although opportunities for pupils' spiritual development are not systematically offered.

Commentary

- The quality of pupils' attitudes, values and personal development has improved well since the last inspection. Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes to work and to extra-curricular activities are very good. Pupils of all ages are highly committed to success in their learning, and the vast majority of pupils' behaviour is very good in supervised and unsupervised situations. Pupils have opportunities to develop very positive attitudes and values within sports, the arts and opportunities such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. Parents expressed feelings that the school has high expectations of pupils through a good work ethic and a culture of individual support. Pupils are keen to take on roles and responsibilities within the school. However, opportunities for the school to capitalise on this enthusiasm are sometimes missed when initiatives are being developed. Pupils are spurred to high levels of personal control and motivational

involvement with the life of the school. For example, they show refreshingly excellent levels of responsibility for others when challenged to co-ordinate sporting activities for other pupils at lunchtime within the sports prefect system. This promotes very good standards of team spirit, a rich range of sporting activities and a sense of independent, purposeful involvement in all those who took part.

8. The vast majority of pupils are courteous and helpful, with very good levels of self-discipline. Pupils' questionnaire results suggested that pupils felt concern about levels of bullying and poor behaviour within the school. This was thoroughly inspected by the inspection team which recognises that some pupils perceive behaviour as being poor and feel strongly about it. Standards of behaviour, personal values and pupils' attitudes are good, and pupils are very aware and sensitive to the behaviour of a tiny minority of pupils at lunch and unsupervised times. Very occasionally the behaviour of a very few reduces the studious, calm and supportive atmosphere in the school.
9. The school is using a graduated response system within lessons to monitor behaviour. This has a good effect on achievement. More effective interrogation of data generated by this system would enable the school to have a more comprehensive view of behaviour and levels of perceived bullying.

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1003	101	0
White – Irish	4	0	0
White – any other White background	17	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	6	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	5	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	15	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	16	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	5	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Chinese	3	0	0
Any other ethnic group	2	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	607	0	0

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

10. Relationships are good. Pupils throughout the school share ideas and work collaboratively in constructive ways. For instance, some pupils play musical instruments for county bands and assemblies and are encouraged by the support of other pupils' goodwill and recognition of their talent.
11. Pupils show commitment to their learning and the vast majority have a strong sense of personal responsibility for their progress. They listen to each other and show respect for

what others say. The vast majority of pupils feel confident to make mistakes in their learning and ask questions of their peers to clarify understanding. Personal, social and health education (PHSE) supports pupils' opportunities to take part in debate, ask questions and show initiative, thus building upon the skills needed to be more independent and reasoned in thought.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	8.0
National data	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.7
National data	1.1

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

12. Attendance has improved since 2002 and is now very good. Rates of fixed term exclusions are average for a school of this size and indicate the firm line taken over specific misdemeanours. Pupils are very eager and happy to be in school. Punctuality is very good with pupils showing self-control and efficient movement across a large site to arrive promptly to lessons. Parents have not been fully responsive to the school's efforts to minimise unnecessary absence and avoid term-time holidays.
13. Provision for moral, social and cultural development is good. Subject areas strive to develop pupils' self respect and confidence and personal, social and health education (PHSE) programmes give pupils opportunities and experiences of adult life. There are chances to think about moral and social issues though subjects such as English, history, art and design and geography. For example, in English and history lessons, ethical and moral questions about political extremism, the holocaust and genocide, exploitation and conservation are raised to give pupils an opportunity to confront issues that have a range of complex opinions surrounding them. Staff provide good role models of how to behave, what is right and wrong, how to relate to people and respect for similarities and differences in peoples' personal cultural and religious beliefs. Extra-curricular activities offer good opportunity for moral, social and personal responsibilities to develop further.
14. The school's provision for spiritual development is satisfactory overall but has not shown significant improvement since the last inspection. Religious education provides the main opportunity for pupils to develop this particular feature of their personal development. Spiritual development is not given particular prominence in subjects and is not promoted systematically to ensure that pupils gain full benefit from planned teaching rather than fragmented experiences. Pupils have too few opportunities to empathise or reflect on what is special about the human spirit.

Sixth form

15. Students are highly motivated in their studies and are very eager to learn and to succeed. They are very mature in their approach to learning and are enjoying this phase of their education. Their concentration and engagement in lessons is very good, as is the capacity of many students to study independently. Work outside of lessons and assignments are completed conscientiously by the vast majority, whose folders are structured and well-organised. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is also very good. Attendance is satisfactory and students are punctual for school. They arrive

at lessons well prepared and in good time to make an effective start. Arrangements for students to sign in and out are secure.

16. Links with the main school are limited due to the split site, but leaders of the sixth form council are involved in options meetings with Year 11 pupils. A good number of Year 12 students also take the opportunity to work with younger pupils through the community volunteer option on a Wednesday afternoon. The very good link established with the Millennium Volunteers programme, together with Young Enterprise activities, is making a significant contribution to the personal development of many students. The sixth form council also provides many opportunities for students to take responsibility, such as through organising and managing numerous social activities. All of this supports a very well developed ethos and identity for the sixth form where students achieve very well academically and mature and develop as individuals.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good overall. There is much lively and interesting teaching from highly expert teachers that promotes rapid learning of new ideas. The pupils' experiences are enriched by a wide range of clubs, activities, trip and visits. Links with parents, other schools and the local community are effective and are enhanced by the school's recently acquired sports college status.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good overall, but are very good in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. Assessment procedures have improved since the last inspection; they are satisfactory overall including in the sixth form, but with some variation in quality.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Expert subject knowledge is put to very good use by a significant number of teachers who make their lessons lively and interesting.
- Pupils in the main school and students in the sixth form respond well to their teachers' high expectations and the challenge of their lessons.
- Teaching in a small number of lessons lacks sufficient focus to maintain the interest and attention of the pupils.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT to enhance teaching and support learning.
- Learning assistants play an effective role in supporting the learning of pupils with special educational needs; however, these pupils are withdrawn too often from classes for no clearly identified reason.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 232 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactor y	Poor	Very Poor
9 (4%)	65 (28%)	86 (37%)	61 (26%)	11 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

17. Teaching has improved considerably since the last inspection. Specific weaknesses identified then have been tackled with considerable success and now only a small number of lessons are unsatisfactory. Set against this, a high proportion of lessons are taught very well and result in considerable pace to the pupils' learning. Teaching is more effective in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9 largely because of the sharp focus placed by teachers on ensuring that examination techniques are taught and understood. This, and the pupils' positive attitudes and desire to be successful, are the major factors in their good progress and the high standards that they achieve.
18. A particular strength of much of the best teaching is the way in which teachers use their high level of subject expertise to plan lessons that build new ideas systematically while providing considerable challenge. These staff have high expectations to which the pupils respond well by trying their hardest and contributing to questioning and discussions. Teachers are able to respond flexibly to any difficulties that the pupils may have by using a wide variety of methods to explain new ideas until they are grasped. The more effective teachers exert firm but friendly control of their classes, resulting in a productive working atmosphere in which learning can thrive. By contrast, teaching in a small number of lessons suffers because the teachers do not exert sufficient control, have unclear aims or do not engage the pupils sufficiently. Time in these lessons is wasted by pupils as their concentration wavers and the teachers resort to having to demand their attention.

19. Teachers mostly employ a wide range of interesting and appropriate methods in their lessons. The structures of the Key Stage 3 strategy are put to good use by many and are having a beneficial effect on the pupils' learning. Starter activities help to focus the pupils' minds on the learning ahead. The purpose of the lesson is explained and, in the best teaching, is returned to at the end as a means of helping the pupils to evaluate the learning that has taken place and the progress that they have made. Resources are used imaginatively; however, there is a distinct lack of use of ICT in all but a very few lessons to make teaching more interesting and to support learning. This considerable weakness has remained since the last inspection, although departments mostly have someone identified with responsibility for co-ordinating this aspect of work. Teachers are also not contributing to the assessment of the capability of the pupils' ICT skills and their application in their subjects.
20. The small number of teaching assistants provide good support for pupils with special educational needs in lessons. They also operate well alongside special educational needs teachers when working with small groups of pupils for specific skill development. However, there is too little teaching assistant support in lessons and too much emphasis on withdrawing pupils for individual and small group work. There are no clear criteria for withdrawing pupils, or targets for what should be achieved during these sessions. By contrast, the teaching of hearing-impaired pupils when they have intensive support sessions taught by the skilled teacher and teaching assistants, is of a very high standard and is focused well on helping the pupils with areas of the curriculum with which they may be having difficulty. Teachers generally stretch the higher-attaining pupils in their classes and make their lessons lively and interesting.
21. Improvements have been secured in assessment procedures since the last inspection. There is now less variability, but still much scope for further development to provide a totally coherent and consistent approach throughout the school. Good procedures are established in German, geography, history, physical education, art and design, English and religious education in Years 10 and 11. In these subjects, except for geography and history, teachers use the information from assessments well to guide the planning of the next steps in the pupils' learning. By contrast, no valid assessment of citizenship is taking place and procedures for the assessment of ICT in Years 10 and 11 are inadequate as not all pupils study the subject. Individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs have been redesigned and provide good information for teachers when planning their lessons. There are good examples of inclusive teaching in design and technology, art and design and physical education. However, most teachers do not use the information sufficiently to plan adapted strategies and resources.

Example of outstanding practice

The teacher selected highly effective methods and used time well in this history lesson, as Year 8 pupils presented arguments about why politicians passed the Public Health Act (1875)

Achievement was excellent in this lively and well thought out lesson which benefited considerably from the high level of commitment of the pupils and the constructive relationships that had been built up over time to produce a highly productive environment for learning. The teacher got the very best from the students, who in turn thoroughly enjoyed the lesson. Teaching was stimulating, enthusiastic and consistently challenging throughout the lesson, stemming from expert knowledge of how to teach and how pupils learn. After a highly effective introduction in which the pupils were asked about the conduct of debates in parliament and how they might be improved, rules for debate were established for the lesson. The pupils were attentive and responded well to the skilful and humorous manner of the teacher. The pupils worked very productively in groups, listening to and commenting constructively on each other's speeches. The teacher encouraged the development of their high levels of literacy. The speeches chosen for reading to the whole class were of an excellent quality, thoroughly

researched and with suitably emotive language. Standards were high and the pupils engrossed throughout the lesson, making very good gains in their learning and understanding.

Sixth form

22. Teaching and learning are very good in the sixth form. Many of the characteristics of the best lessons in Year 7 to 11 are also evident here. Teachers use their considerable subject expertise to very good effect. Their planning is thorough and the methods adopted are usually stimulating and challenging. Many teachers demonstrate that they have high expectations of the students by requiring them to think and to respond thoughtfully and in detail to questions and in discussions. The students are challenged intellectually and expected to work hard. These teachers tackle quickly and effortlessly any difficulties experienced by the students, using a variety of approaches. The students respond well and are interested and highly motivated. They show considerable respect for their teachers within an atmosphere of warm and productive relationships. New concepts are understood rapidly and prior learning consolidated thoroughly by the conscientious approach of most, but not all, students. They undertake tasks set during lessons and for studying at other times with care and effort, taking a pride in their work.
23. Teaching shortcomings are mostly when there is insufficient challenge or the students are not engaged in the lesson. This occurs in lessons where learning does not build rapidly on what the students already know or where the teacher's explanations are confusing and time consuming. Learning in the very small number of lessons like this that were observed during the inspection was limited in spite of the perseverance and concentration of the students.
24. Much action has been taken to improve the assessment of the students' work. However, some inconsistencies in approach and practice remain. For example, it is only over the last year that it has been agreed that the students' predicted A Level grades, based on their GCSE results, should be shared with them and then routinely used to set targets and help them to see how to improve. This is not being carried out by all staff. Consequently, the students do not always have a clear picture of what they can achieve, how well they are doing in meeting these goals and what steps are needed to improve their current standard of work.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory overall and is enriched by a very good range of extra-curricular activities in which large numbers of pupils participate. Staffing levels are good and accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The wide range of extra-curricular activities enriches the experiences of large numbers of pupils and students.
- A wide range and variety of A Level courses are provided in the sixth form, but there are no clear vocational pathways from Year 10 upwards.
- The school does not comply with National Curriculum requirements for teaching ICT, for the use of ICT within subjects or for teaching citizenship.

Commentary

25. Improvements have taken place in some aspects of the curriculum since the last inspection while some major weaknesses remain. Requirements for religious education are now being met. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 study a short course to GCSE and over one-quarter convert this to a full GCSE. The languages provision enables pupils to study three languages from Year 8 if they choose to do so; Latin is one of the languages taught. By contrast, the school still does not meet requirements for teaching the National Curriculum for ICT or for meeting requirements for the use of ICT in subjects. There is a well-established programme for PSHE taught by form tutors which also encompasses an appropriate careers element. One particularly valuable input to PSHE is from the staff from the hearing-impaired base, who make a valuable contribution to a unit on deaf awareness. The school is attempting to teach citizenship as part of this programme in addition to contributions from other subjects. This arrangement is not working and is not enabling National Curriculum requirements for citizenship to be met. Pupils use their literacy and numeracy skills well in other subjects but their development across the curriculum is not receiving consistent attention.
26. The school is having reasonable success in ensuring that the needs of all pupils are met through the curriculum and that all have access to the wide range of opportunities on offer. Pupils with special educational needs generally have access to the whole curriculum, except when withdrawn from lessons. Teaching assistants play a major role in promoting access and monitoring the progress of pupils they work with; however, there is insufficient monitoring of the subjects being missed by pupils when they are withdrawn for specialist teaching. Hearing-impaired pupils are very well included in all aspects of school life including extra-curricular activities. They are taught the same curriculum as other pupils, including foreign languages, with some specialist support in lessons. Staff successfully integrate the small number of pupils with English as an additional language into school life and they have valuable weekly support from a specialist teacher. These pupils frequently make good progress with speaking and writing English, but many do not take public examinations as they attend the school for a relatively short period. Subjects make their own provision for the gifted and talented, who are catered for particularly well in physical education through recent sports college initiatives. Additionally, some good links have been established with the National Academy for the Gifted and Talented. However, until recently there has been no overview of provision across the school although plans indicate that the school is well placed to develop provision here significantly.
27. At present, the school takes advantage of the flexibility now available in the curriculum for Years 10 and 11 to provide courses with a greater technology focus to a small group of pupils through links with the local further education college. Other students for whom the full GCSE diet is inappropriate have individually designed courses that may include work-related learning. Although these are valuable courses in their own right, there are no clear, educational pathways planned for these students from the age of 14 to 19. The current review of the curriculum is wisely focusing on ensuring that vocational elements are expanded by taking advantage of some of the experiences gained from sixth form links with the further education college. Within this, a much sharper focus is being placed on ensuring that pathways exist for all pupils whatever course combination they choose.
28. A major feature of the school is the wide range of extra-curricular opportunities provided and the high participation rate. The sports college plays a particularly important role in this. The school has received the Sportsmark Gold award in national recognition of its excellent physical education enrichment programme. Large numbers of pupils

participate in sporting activities on a regular basis. There is also good take-up of the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. Other areas of the school also play their part. The school uses its proximity to Stratford for regular theatre trips, there are several drama productions and a large number of musical activities. After-school lessons in modern foreign languages and foreign exchange visits also contribute significantly to the pupils' experiences.

29. The school is well staffed by teachers who have a wide range of relevant experience and subject expertise. The ratio of teachers to pupils is better than the national average. However, there are too few teaching assistants to provide the support needed in lessons for pupils with special educational needs. The accommodation has been greatly enhanced by the new sports centre, which includes a sports hall, dance studio, fitness suite and all-weather pitch. These facilities are constantly in use and act as a focal point for the school and the community. Access to ICT resources such as video-analysis equipment also considerably enhances learning in physical education. By contrast, ICT teaching facilities and the access to ICT resources by other subjects are considerable weaknesses and have improved little since the last inspection. There are some shortages of equipment in science and very limited resources for citizenship. The library is quite sparse in areas such as mathematics and music and is not used well as a focus for independent learning.

Sixth form

30. The large number of students in the sixth form enables the school to offer a very wide range of AS and A Level courses. These meet well the needs and aspirations of the students, the vast majority of whom continue their studies in higher education. The small number of students with special educational needs and with English as an additional language are catered for well; they are very well integrated and are achieving very well. Many subjects that are not studied in the main school, such as psychology and philosophy, attract good numbers of students. At present, the range of options for students who may prefer or be better suited to vocational courses is limited. This is largely because of the lack of demand, as these opportunities are not coherently planned from Year 10 upwards. However, one particular success is the increasingly popular AVCE course in leisure and recreation. Provision is also made for a small group to study Level 2 vocational courses at Warwickshire College combined with English, mathematics and ICT at the Castle Centre. Key skills courses are also provided in these subjects for students who have not achieved a suitable standard by the time they enter the sixth form. One shortcoming noted at the last inspection that has not been dealt with is that there is still no provision for all students to meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus for religious education.
31. As in the main school, opportunities for the enrichment and extension of the students' experiences are plentiful and well planned. Wednesday afternoons are given over to sport or community activities in which most students participate. Many teams take part in matches against other schools and there is a wide range of other trips and visits, many of which, but by no means all, are associated with subjects being studied. The students speak highly of these activities and see these as some of the main benefits of remaining at the school.
32. Staffing levels are good and the students benefit considerably from the high degree of subject expertise of their teachers and their experience of teaching sixth form subjects.

While most teaching groups are of an appropriate size, a significant number are quite small, particularly in Year 13. The school is aware of this. Management and governors are considering how changes can be made in the light of the tight budget while maintaining the wide range of options available to the students. The accommodation at the Castle site offers a wide range of specialist facilities of variable quality. While most is satisfactory, the layout of the ICT rooms and the quality of the theatre studies accommodation restrict learning. Art rooms vary from the good Year 13 room to poor Year 12 facilities. Accommodation for resistant materials lacks sufficient flexibility. The school recognises the shortcomings and has recently secured funding for considerable refurbishment of the site. Resources are generally satisfactory but, as at the main school, there are shortcomings in ICT and in ICT access for subjects. The library has some dated materials, although many departments retain their own source of books, magazines and journals.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes satisfactory provision for pupils' care and welfare, and health and safety matters are better managed than at the last inspection. There is a good framework for support and guidance, but the school needs to monitor its quality and effectiveness. Pupils value the advice offered when choosing courses, but are not consulted enough or involved in reviewing initiatives.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The health and safety co-ordinator has produced a good set of policies and risk assessments.
- As at the last inspection there are inconsistencies in the role of form tutor.
- Induction is good and preparation for higher education is very good.
- Child protection matters are well managed and good use is made of outside agencies.

Commentary

33. Arrangements within school for pupils' care and welfare are satisfactory. There are enough fully trained first-aid staff and a good number of emergency aiders. Teachers new to the school are briefed on child protection matters, and those with responsibility liaise with the appropriate agencies. At the time of the last inspection there were concerns about monitoring health and safety. This is now much better managed, with a good set of policies; however, risk assessments are not in place in all subject areas, and there is no systematic programme of walkabouts, routinely monitoring each department and its work. Governors have recently agreed to become more involved in monitoring health and safety, thus providing an external perspective.
34. Form tutors' use of registration time is still too variable. Their role was an issue at the last inspection. They now have the assessment information to offer guidance during the review and target-setting process; however, this is not consistently used to set sharp and appropriate targets to help the pupils raise the standard of their work. Most pupils with statements of special educational need attend their annual reviews. There are very good links with specialist outside agencies who provide advice and resources for individual pupils. This advice is used well by special educational needs staff. There is close working between the special educational needs co-ordinator, the behaviour manager and the leader of the hearing resource base so that pupils' needs are well known. However, the links between the special educational needs staff and the pastoral and subject staff

are less effective. Careers guidance and work experience placements are both timely and useful and pupils value them.

35. Parents, pupils and primary headteachers all confirm that good arrangements are made to help pupils settle in when they first arrive in the school. The inspection confirms these views.
36. The school council is an under-used resource. It operates only as year councils, concerned with functions and fund-raising, and has no overall role. Too many pupils do not value its work, and there is a missed opportunity for them to work as a democratically elected forum, participating in and reviewing initiatives.

Sixth form

37. Most students value the advice and guidance that they received in deciding on and then making the transition into the sixth form. Students largely feel they are on the right courses, but many would have welcomed even more subject advice beforehand. Those joining from other schools feel well prepared and welcome. The opportunity to transfer between courses early in Year 12 is also welcomed. Effective support continues, with good access to independent careers advice and guidance. Nearly all students go on to higher education. The support offered for the transition to higher education is very good and encompasses insights into life changes and personal development as well as the detail and preparation for applications.
38. Students largely enjoy sixth form life, especially the good, expert teaching, and the more adult relationships with staff. They also value the support provided by subject teachers, taking the opportunity to see them if they are having difficulty with their work.
39. There is an increasing use of data to monitor students and target support, and this is developing the role of form tutors. A mechanism to trigger concerns from subject staff has also been developed. As yet these systems are not being used consistently within and between all subjects; this is limiting their impact. A questionnaire has been used on a number of occasions to encourage the students to reflect on their experiences in the sixth form and the sixth form council also feels empowered to raise any issues or concerns. Leaders of the council report that such things very rarely arise and that the vast majority of students are content with the provision; this was confirmed in the many discussions that took place with students.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents, the community and other educational institutions are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Reports are good and give information on pupil attainment.
- Parents are supportive of the school and appreciate its academic successes, although they would like to be consulted more.
- Community links are good and improving.
- The school has established good, positive working relationships with local primaries.

Commentary

40. Parents are confident that their children like school and that staff expect them to work hard and do their best. A significant proportion of those responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire did not feel that they were kept well informed about how their child is getting on. Much of this relates to recent changes in the timing of parents' meetings and issuing reports, which were not carefully enough explained in advance. This led to a longer gap than they had expected between consultations. The new system gives parents much more detailed information about their child's achievement. Annual reports issued this school year are good. They are better than at the time of the last inspection because they include clear information about what is taught and details of the pupil's progress with target grades to work towards. Mid-year summaries of this information keep them updated. All parents of pupils with a statement of special educational need attend their child's annual review. Links with their parents are good. Individual education plans are usually sent home, although they do not contain suggestions for ways in which parents might support their child.
41. The weekly newsletter and the sports' college newsletter "Winning Post" keep parents well informed about events. The option choice programme is helpful for parents as well as pupils, and gives enough detail about what is studied. Curriculum information is better than at the last inspection. Most parents find the school approachable but they do not feel that the school seeks their views enough; inspection evidence confirms this. Although there have been some occasions on which representatives were asked for their opinions, for example on the new school uniform, consultation is not a regular part of school planning.
42. The school's impact within its community is improving. There is a community programme for sixth formers through the Millennium Volunteers and mentor training through the University of the First Age. Individuals, clubs and organisations use its sporting facilities. The Education Business Partnership provides valuable support to the careers and work experience programmes, and a community policewoman is often on site. The school, as a base for the county music service, hosts area bands, orchestras and the primary music festival. The school's new sporting facilities are a valuable and well-used resource for the community, including other schools. The momentum for sport associated with sports' college status is greatly benefiting local primary schools, and this is enhancing already good relationships. There is good co-operation over transition units of work started at primary school then studied in Year 7.

Sixth form

43. Sixth form course information is addressed to students, but is equally useful for their parents, who are also encouraged to attend higher education information evenings. Reports are very focused on potential examination grades, but indicate good knowledge of students' capabilities. Students feel that their parents are happy with the decision-making process, although there is insufficient support for those wanting to go straight to work.
44. Sixth form students are given increasing freedom, for example to provide their own absence notes, and in Year 13 to study at home, but parents are still contacted over discipline matters. A community programme for sixth formers through the Millennium Volunteers allows them to play a part in the school's developing community role.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. Taken separately, leadership and management are both satisfactory as is the leadership of the headteacher. Governance is also satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are good in the sixth form.
- Art and design and religious education are very well led and managed.
- Leadership and management of ICT are unsatisfactory throughout the school.
- There is a lack of consistency and insufficient rigour in the procedures for monitoring and evaluating the work of departments.

Commentary

45. The headteacher has continued to be a strong driving force within the school since the last inspection. He is highly visible around all three sites and this, plus his caring approach to both pupils and staff, makes a significant contribution to the very positive ethos within the school. He successfully led the bid to gain specialist Sports College status which has resulted in improved facilities and provided a valuable addition to the resources not only for the pupils and students but also for the local community. While a number of issues from the previous inspection have been dealt with successfully, such as the shortcomings in art and design, some important areas for improvement remain to be tackled.
46. The two recently appointed deputy headteachers are providing dynamic support to the headteacher and having a positive impact on the work of the school. The headship team is now beginning to establish a longer-term vision for the school and a more systematic approach to strategic planning. Over the last eighteen months, the team has worked hard to review practices and procedures, thus providing good opportunities to revisit the aims of the school and consolidate a common sense of purpose among the staff. The approach to implementing the Key Stage 3 strategy has been one example of this. The vast majority of teachers have welcomed the opportunity to review their practice and consider new approaches. The very effective leadership and management in art and design and religious education, for example, have resulted in some significant improvements in both overall provision and achievement of the pupils. However, some more established middle leaders are finding it more difficult to embrace change. Improvements are also occurring in ICT but the legacy of poor leadership and management of this area is still limiting provision and effectiveness.
47. There is a lack of clarity between the respective roles of heads of faculty and heads of department. As a result, the work of staff within departments is not always monitored and evaluated systematically or with sufficient rigour. This limits the development of some departments as weaknesses are not always identified and tackled quickly enough. Similarly, key strengths are not always shared and spread more widely. Some useful training on leadership and management has been provided for middle leaders but it has not fully met the needs of all individuals. Performance management is in place but its use as a tool to effect change and improvement has yet to be fully exploited. Some team leaders are not sufficiently skilled to maximise the opportunities that the process offers.

48. The deputy headteachers have been instrumental in strengthening the school improvement planning process. Priorities are appropriate and steps are being taken systematically to secure improvement. The quality of departmental plans and their links to the whole school plan varies considerably, according to the experience and skills of the middle leaders. The line management role recently established by the headship team is providing helpful support to individuals, but there remains a lack of consistency across the school. Procedures for tracking pupil progress and target setting, for example, differ from department to department and this limits the ability of heads of year to establish patterns of performance across subjects and to provide focused support and guidance to individuals. However, under the direction of the headship team, these procedures are beginning to embed and improve. Where systematic procedures are in place, there are clear signs of progress such as in design and technology, German and geography.
49. The special educational needs co-ordinator has a clear vision about the way the department needs to evolve to bring provision for special educational needs in line with the code of practice. Several changes have been made so that work with pupils with learning and behavioural needs are linked, individual education plans have been developed, roles within special educational needs are clear and the effectiveness of the work of teaching assistants is monitored. However, there is some reluctance among some special educational needs staff to change their working practices so that pupils are supported in lessons and withdrawn only when there is a clear rationale. The department provides very good quality information to subject teachers, but as yet the small number of special needs staff are not able to influence the work of subject teachers easily. There are too many pupils with individual education plans, so that the system is not easily managed.
50. The governors are well-informed and fully committed to the school. They provide both support and challenge. For example, the governors, being concerned about performance in art and design, were actively involved in establishing a review of the department to inform steps for improvement. The governing body has recently established a new committee structure with a view to streamlining its work and increasing efficiency. The chairs of the new committees are experienced and know the school well. They are now more closely involved in the school improvement planning process and are aware of current strengths and areas for development for the school. The governors hold the school to account for standards and quality of teaching, but have not been sufficiently rigorous in monitoring the implementation of statutory requirements. As well as non-compliance with religious education in the sixth form, ICT requirements are not being fully met in the main school and the provision for collective worship is inadequate.
51. The school has suffered from a tight budgetary position for some years now. Staffing levels are good, but teachers are not always deployed to best effect, such as in special educational needs. There is scope to review staff deployment in the light of the need to improve ICT facilities. The comparatively new chair of finance has established effective systems for reviewing policies and monitoring the budget on a regular basis. She has set up clear targets for the short, medium and long term. There are improved links between proposed expenditure and the school improvement plan and the school is now on target to be in a healthier financial position next year. Regular meetings between the chair of finance, finance officer and the headteacher have resulted in more effective financial management on a day-to-day basis. Given the comparatively low expenditure per pupil and the very good achievement, value for money is good overall.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	5,578,990
Total expenditure	5,518,148
Expenditure per pupil	3267

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-64,712
Balance carried forward to the next	-2,870

Sixth Form

52. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. Systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of students are becoming more rigorous, with an increasing contribution from form tutors. There is greater emphasis on the analysis of data to review progress and achievement and to set targets, although the use made of this by subject leaders is too variable and not being consistently used to raise standards. However, overall the leadership and management provided by subject leaders are effective.
53. Good day-to-day management and organisation ensures that the Castle Centre works smoothly and to the benefit of students. It also encourages high levels of enjoyment for academic and social activities to support the development of the individual. Students themselves feel well supported, value the access to subject and pastoral staff and welcome the guidance provided. The sixth form provides good cost-effectiveness overall. However, some lack of flexibility within the curriculum leads to some very small groups in Year 13. Leadership is providing the necessary strategic direction to continue to raise achievement.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average in Years 7 to 11.
- Teaching is good and enables pupils to achieve very well.
- Pupils with special educational needs and those whose first language is not English achieve very well.
- Not enough use is made of computers to promote and support learning.
- Teaching and learning are not systematically monitored and evaluated to ensure consistency and the sharing of good practice.

Commentary

54. Pupils enter Year 7 with attainment well above the national average. In the 2003 tests, pupils in Year 9 achieved results, which were well above the average when compared to all schools nationally and pupils' prior attainment. Work seen during the inspection indicates that pupils currently in Years 7 to 9 are on course to achieve equally well. Standards in speaking and listening are very high. Pupils are confident, fluent speakers. They are encouraged to develop extended answers and can justify them with reference to texts. All pupils are encouraged to participate by the well established rules for listening and responding positively to each other. Pupils read accurately and expressively, empathising with characters and able to analyse plot, structure and use of language to achieve a particular effect. Standards of presentation, spelling and punctuation are very high. Pupils are able to write effectively, using the language and format appropriate for their audience and purpose.
55. Compared to all schools nationally and those with similar results in Year 9, GCSE results in 2003 were well above average. Work seen during the inspection indicates a similar level of achievement in the current Years 10 and 11. The quality of discussion and analysis is impressive and supports the very high standards of reading and writing evident in the work of pupils of all abilities. Fewer of the most able pupils achieve the highest grades when compared to the national average, particularly the boys. From the work seen, it appears that such pupils are not always challenged to edit and redraft their own writing to meet the very highest standards, to which they should be aspiring.
56. Teaching is good, with some examples seen of very good and excellent lessons. This enables pupils who are highly motivated and well supported to make very good progress. Lessons are well prepared and based on very good subject knowledge. In the best lessons, teachers use imaginative and innovative approaches. For example, a Year 9 class was carefully grouped and asked to collaborate in order to produce a clear outline of the plot of Macbeth. In this lesson, lower-attaining pupils played a key part as readers of the synopsis of key scenes prepared by the teacher, which enabled them to make very

good progress in their understanding of this challenging play. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and give clear guidance on how to improve, both orally and through written feedback. Marking and assessment is generally very thorough, particularly for Years 10 and 11, where pupils are given explicit targets for improvement. A new system of half termly assessments has been introduced for Years 7 to 9, which enables pupils' progress to be tracked and targets for improvement identified. Teachers do not make sufficient use of computers to support learning. The computer suite shared with mathematics is underused and there is insufficient systematic planning for the use of computers within schemes of work.

57. The quality of leadership and management is currently satisfactory. The acting, part time head of department has maintained good provision during the absence of the head of department. With other senior colleagues, she has a clear vision for improvement, but there is inadequate provision for systematic, rigorous dissemination, monitoring and evaluation of departmental priorities. This makes it more difficult to ensure the consistency of planning and teaching, or to identify and remedy occasional weaknesses within the department. The department is well resourced and offers good opportunities for extra curricular enrichment, making full use of the proximity of the Royal Shakespeare Company. Overall progress since the last inspection has been good. Standards have risen and the quality of teaching and learning has improved.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

58. Standards of literacy across the school are very good, building on the well above average attainment of pupils on entry. Many staff utilise this in other subjects, but there is not a consistent promotion across the curriculum. The whole staff has undertaken training and produced a literacy policy that is supported by examples of good practice from across the curriculum. Pupils are very confident, effective speakers and listen well to their teachers and each other. Opportunities for developmental talk are planned into lessons in all subject areas. For example, pupils in a Year 8 history lesson used parliamentary conventions to structure a debate on public health in the nineteenth century. Pupils are very confident, competent readers who are adept at reading between the lines. Pupils can differentiate between fact and opinion and are able to discuss the influence of background and context on a writer's views. Teachers ensure pupils can understand and use relevant vocabulary accurately. They explicitly teach pupils how to structure the essays, reports, personal responses and evaluations required by different subject areas, providing writing frames where necessary, and demonstrating the language appropriate to the task. The library is well stocked and inviting, with good computer access. Pupils choose to use the library at lunchtimes and are very well supported by the library staff, who also make valuable contributions to library skills lessons.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievement is satisfactory.
- Teachers have excellent command of their subject and work conscientiously.
- The faculty has no statement of vision relating to the teaching of languages.

- Management structures are clearer than at the time of the last report, but monitoring of teachers' work is not systematic and some practice is inconsistent.

Commentary

59. GCSE results in French in 2003 were above average, better than 2002 and in line with the standards of recent years. The pupils entered for French in 2003 achieved similar results in this subject as they did in the average for all their other subjects. Boys' results were slightly better than their results in other subjects and girls' were below. Standards observed in lessons and in pupils' exercise books vary, but are above average overall, and the popularity of the course in Years 10 and 11 is increasing. By the end of Year 9, pupils gain results which are above the national average, with the percentages of pupils gaining the highest levels well above national expectations. Achievement is satisfactory in all year groups, but older, lower-attaining pupils do not work as hard as they can and feel they have made little progress. On the other hand, most other groups concentrate hard and achieve well. These include a class of lower-attaining pupils in Year 8 and a group of older, higher-attaining pupils in an after-school class. Overall, higher-attaining pupils achieve better than others. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is satisfactory, especially when they receive additional support in class.
60. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, with strengths and weaknesses, which apply to all year groups in the main school. The motivation of most pupils is high and the school promotes this through its provision of enrichment activities, such as the exchange with Bourg la Reine. Teachers plan lessons well, respond carefully to pupils' written work and form good relationships in class. They are all very good speakers of French and some use it throughout most lessons. However, this practice is not consistent and opportunities for pupils to speak French themselves are often too highly structured to enable them to become confident, independent speakers. Most pupils know what level they are on, but respond less confidently when asked what they need to do to improve. Some pupils do not use computers to aid their language learning and certain aspects of ICT, such as the use of a spelling check in French and research on the Internet, are undeveloped.
61. Both the leadership and the management of French are satisfactory, with some weaknesses, which were also identified at the last inspection. Staffing resources are well deployed and all teachers in the large team work hard. Other resources, including the computer suite and language laboratory, are well cared for and used to satisfactory effect in lessons. The department handbook contains no over-arching statement of vision for language teaching in the school. There is no systematic process for the monitoring of teaching in order to minimise inconsistencies in important areas such as the use of the foreign language. The faculty has agreed its development priorities, but has written no plan to put them into action. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory. The above average standards have been maintained, the staffing situation is more stable and pupils continue to achieve satisfactorily overall, with higher-attaining pupils achieving well.

German

Provision in German is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan lessons well, with very good resources, using German most of the time.
- Teachers work well as a team with strong support from the teacher in charge.
- Achievement is good overall, but some lower-attaining pupils do not achieve as well as the majority.
- Pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to make full use of ICT to aid their learning.

Commentary

62. Results at GCSE in German in 2003 were above average. Girls did much better than boys, both in raw results and when the results of each group are compared with national averages. The pupils entered for German in 2003 achieved slightly better results in this subject than they did in the average for all their other subjects. The number of pupils opting for German in Year 10 rose between 2002 and 2003. Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment at the end of Year 9 are above the national average, with the percentages of pupils gaining the highest levels well above national expectations. Standards observed in lessons and in pupils' written work are also above average. The majority of pupils achieve well, making good progress over time and working to capacity in lessons. In some classes, where attainment is low, achievement is low, but the achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is good overall. Achievement is consistently good in Years 10 and 11. Most of the pupils taking German at this level have average or above average prior attainment and all benefit from the course, which provides a good level of challenge.
63. Teaching and learning are good overall with all year groups. Teachers use German to communicate with pupils throughout most lessons and this is particularly well developed with pupils in Years 10 and 11. Activities are carefully planned and sequenced. Classrooms are very well presented with colourful and helpful displays of key words and examples of pupils' work. Pupils learn well because teachers respond carefully to their work so they know what level they are on. Some higher-attaining pupils in Year 9 can describe in detail what they need to do to move up to the next level. All pupils appreciate the respectful and supportive relationships established in lessons. Some lower-attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve less well than others because the type of work they are given does not meet their needs and standards of behaviour occasionally fall below the levels expected. Overall, the achievement of pupils with special educational needs is good. The use of ICT to aid learning is inconsistent. Not all pupils receive their entitlement and the use of the German spelling and grammar check is rare even amongst those who do.
64. The leadership and management of German are good. Teamwork is good, with the burden of work shared amongst members of the department. Resources, many of them home-made, are colourful and engaging. There are no systematic monitoring processes in the faculty as a whole, but the teacher in charge of German is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and takes effective action to remedy weaknesses if they emerge. As in French, there is no over-arching statement of vision. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. The strengths of German teaching and pupils' attainment, noted in the last report, have been maintained.

Spanish

Provision in Spanish is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and plan their lessons well.
- There is inconsistency in the use of the foreign language. Most teachers do not use enough Spanish in lessons or encourage the pupils to use Spanish as the normal means of communication.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the structure of the language in Years 10 and 11.
- Pupils generally behave well in lessons and enjoy studying the language. Relationships between staff and pupils are generally good.
- ICT resources are not used to maximum effect in lessons.

Commentary

65. Achievement is satisfactory overall, but is good in Years 10 and 11. Most of the potentially higher-attaining pupils make good progress in the subject, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Lower-attaining pupils make satisfactory progress because of the high expectations of the teacher. GCSE results in Spanish improved from 2002 to 2003 and are now above the national average. Staffing difficulties have led to a lack of continuity in some classes, and explain the poorer results in Spanish at GCSE, by comparison with other languages. Standards observed in lessons are average in Years 8 and 9 and above average in Years 10 and 11. More able pupils in Years 10 and 11 have a good knowledge of the structure of the language and an extensive vocabulary, and produce written Spanish that is well above the national average.
66. Teachers have a very good command of the subject, and plan their lessons well. Lesson objectives are communicated to the pupils, and in the best lessons teachers indicate the next steps for learning. Effective use is made of time, and teachers often let pupils know how long they are expected to work on particular tasks. Lessons contain a variety of activities to engage the learners. In the best lessons teachers adapt the work to cater for the full range of pupils. However, teaching is not always matched to the learning styles and abilities of the pupils. The use of spoken Spanish by teachers is inconsistent across the department.
67. The relationship between staff and students is generally good, and pupils are polite and respectful. Relationships in classes overall are positive and conducive to effective learning. Teachers have high expectations and most pupils listen very well and behave well in class. Where relationships are fragile it tends to be with lower ability classes in Years 8 and 9, where it is often difficult for pupils to focus their attention on the tasks for an hour, usually because the teaching is inappropriately matched to the abilities and learning styles of the pupils.
68. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory. Planning for National Curriculum requirements is no longer a significant weakness. Schemes of work and new courses provide appropriate opportunities for pupils of all abilities to be suitably engaged in and stimulated by the subject. There has been good progress in the use of assessment since the last inspection. Tracking systems of student attainment have been introduced. They are still in the early stages in Years 8 and 9, and data is not used to identify and deal with underachievement at an early stage. However, students in Years 10 and 11 are given good information about their targets for GCSE, and have a good idea about what to do to improve their work. Insufficient progress has been made in the use of ICT. Pupils do not use ICT in lessons to develop their Spanish language skills.

69. Leadership and management of Spanish is satisfactory overall. There are effective teams within the faculty of modern languages, and there is good practice in other subjects within the faculty. However, there are insufficient opportunities to observe teaching and learning and to share good practice within Spanish and across the faculty. At present, there is inconsistency in practice. Standards of work in Spanish are beginning to be monitored, and the newly qualified teacher for Spanish has received significant support from the second in faculty.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average.
- Pupils' achievement is very good because teaching is challenging and leads to very good learning.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good.
- Leadership and management are satisfactory although new developments have not had sufficient time to impact significantly on pupils' achievement.
- The use of ICT within lessons is satisfactory but does not always have the impact that it might.

Commentary

70. Results in National Curriculum tests for Year 9 pupils in 2003 were well above the national average. A significant proportion of pupils achieved the higher Levels 7 and 8. This is a good improvement on the results in 2002 and represents very good progress from the pupils' attainment on entry to the school. Standards seen in lessons are well above the national expectations and match achievement in national tests. Learning is interesting and teachers engage and motivate pupils to learn, with the result that pupils' achievement in Year 7 to 9 is very good. Pupils build their knowledge, skills and understanding in a systematic manner to become mathematically confident. They are numerically very competent and apply their skills very well in other subjects.
71. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average. Virtually all pupils achieved a grade in the A* to E range. The proportion gaining the highest A* to B grades exceeded the national average. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' achievement is very good. The vast majority of pupils who achieve above the national average at the end of Year 9 go on to achieve the highest grades at the end of Year 11. The work seen indicates that standards are similar to those achieved in examinations. Teachers make effective use of information about individual pupil performance at the end of Year 9 to plan lessons that match the group and individual needs. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 is rigorous and leads to highly motivated and consistently good learning.
72. Pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language achieve similarly to their peers. Teaching offers pupils activities that are designed to illuminate and reinforce complex forms of functions. This ensures that pupils who need opportunities to question or reinforce new knowledge, are well supported. Pupils needing support within mathematics make very good progress in a caring environment.

Some groups are very large in number and many pupils benefit from the support of learning assistants.

73. The quality of teaching and learning is very good, particularly in Years 10 and 11. In the vast majority of lessons, teachers effectively use aspects of the good practice outlined in the national strategy for mathematics. Lessons are punctuated by a useful warm-up activity that engages pupils from the start. In a few lessons, an opportunity for teachers to consolidate the learning was missed by not reviewing the learning objectives at the end. Teachers make effective use of mini white-boards, graphical calculators, different aspects of pupil questioning and practical activities to strengthen learning. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to ensure pupils' learning progresses at a challenging pace. Teachers know their pupils well and the good relationships that are evident in lessons between teachers and pupils ensure that individuals are well supported and helped. In a few lessons, the learning was restricted because of an inappropriate range of activities and weaker classroom management. There is insufficient use of ICT.
74. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. There is a clear vision for the development of the subject with a focus on extending pupils' learning by increasing the use of ICT and strengthening the assessment of pupils' progress and work. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. Standards have risen and the major weaknesses identified then have been dealt with successfully. The management of the department has recently benefited from new leadership, which has cohesively built up the teaching abilities of a strong team of experienced and specialist teachers who support each other well. New developments have had a limited period of time to impact significantly on pupils' achievement. There are barriers to the effectiveness of leadership and management linked to the current approaches of the whole-school strategic planning and quality assurance systems. This aspect has not significantly improved since the last inspection.

Mathematics across the curriculum

75. Standards of numeracy are above average and provision is good; however, the development of these skills in other subjects is inconsistent. Pupils have a good command of number facts and are able to tackle numerical calculations in different situations. The National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented well but has yet to be monitored or audited effectively. Other subjects have begun to incorporate strategies to support the systematic development of numeracy on their schemes of work. There is good practice in science, geography, design and technology and satisfactory use made of mathematical skills in the teaching of art and design, PHSE and physical education. Greater use of mathematical and numeracy skills in ICT would significantly enhance pupils' achievement.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in national tests and examinations are well above average.
- Most pupils achieve well because of the clear focus on preparation for tests and examinations.
- Arrangements for reviewing the work of the faculty are not rigorous enough to tackle inconsistencies in teaching, learning and assessment.
- The use of computers to enhance the pupils' learning is unsatisfactory and does not meet statutory requirements.

Commentary

76. Teachers place great emphasis on making sure that pupils are well prepared for national tests and examinations. This has resulted in standards that are well above average in the national tests for Year 9 pupils and in separate science and dual award GCSE examinations. Standards in the 2003 tests and examinations were well above those in similar schools, continuing an above average improvement trend. The standards seen during the inspection were above average throughout the school. The pupils have a good understanding of the key ideas in biology, chemistry and physics and they carry out experimental work well, with above average standards in GCSE coursework investigations.
77. Achievement in lessons is satisfactory for most pupils but the emphasis placed on test and examination success ensures that the pace of learning improves towards the end of each course, so that overall achievement is good. This pattern reflects the quality of teaching and learning, which is good overall: good in Years 10 and 11, but satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. In most lessons, teachers use their good subject knowledge to make it clear what pupils are expected to learn, drawing on real-life examples to add interest and relevance to the work. While most pupils have good attitudes and respond well to this teaching, some lessons are less successful when teachers do not deal effectively with inattentive behaviour. This is exacerbated in Years 7 to 9 in lessons that are not planned well enough to suit the range of needs in mixed ability classes. As a result, the pace of these lessons is too slow and lower-attaining pupils lose concentration. Learning is better when skilled support teachers or learning support assistants are present, but this support is limited in science lessons. Nevertheless, pupils with special educational needs achieve satisfactorily, reaching the standards that would be expected.
78. Science lessons present many opportunities for the pupils to develop their skills in communication and mathematics. Standards in calculation and graphical work are above average. However, the recent improvements in the availability of computer equipment have not made an impact in science lessons because teachers are not fully trained and confident in its use. Systems for assessing pupils' work have been improved by the introduction of target setting but this is not yet fully established. Some lessons use ideas from the Key Stage 3 strategy but this is not yet embedded well enough to improve substantially the quality of learning.

79. As a result of satisfactory leadership and management, improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards have continued to improve; however, work still remains to be done to eliminate all other shortcomings identified at the time. While an overall focus on high standards and success in tests and examinations has been established, the work of the individual heads of subject is not co-ordinated through a faculty improvement plan. This results in inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment because monitoring systems are not rigorous enough to identify and tackle weaknesses. For example, the quality of routine marking varies widely and often gives inadequate feedback to pupils because the marking policy is not being followed. Resources are well managed but they have to be shared between sites so there are sometimes shortages in lessons, reducing the quality of learning.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results in ICT and in an ICT related business course were well above average in 2002 and improved further in 2003.
- Examination courses are taken by less than half of students in Years 10 and 11.
- There are insufficient opportunities for all students in Years 10 and 11 develop their ICT skills and knowledge.
- There is insufficient time and too few opportunities for students in Years 7 to 9 to develop their ICT skills and knowledge in sufficient depth.
- The use of ICT is outstanding in physical education and very good in music.
- The use of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory overall.

Commentary

80. Standards in GCSE ICT were well above average in 2002 and the percentage of A*-C grades increased further in 2003 and was very impressive. In both years, all those entered passed the examination. In the 2003 GCSE business and communications studies examination A*-C results were above average and almost all students passed. This represented very good progress for many students taking this course. These courses were taken by about one-third of students in Years 10 and 11.
81. All pupils in Years 7 to 9 have the equivalent of half of an ICT lesson per week in which they make progress. This is because good teaching results in good learning and achievement in these timetabled lessons, particularly those taught by ICT specialists. Activities are based upon the scheme of work recommended by the National Strategy for ICT, but they only have half the recommended time. In addition, some of the blocks of time have lengthy gaps between them, which hinders continuity and progression in the pupils' learning.
82. In the ICT examination courses in Years 10 and 11, because of good teaching, standards are good overall and some students are able to demonstrate a high level of competence in ICT. Lessons are well planned and good resources are used effectively. The standard of coursework is good and often very good, making an effective contribution to the well above average examination results. Students with special educational needs are well supported, particularly in the business and communications studies course.

83. The majority of students in Years 10 and 11, however, are reliant upon the use of ICT in subjects to develop and practise their ICT skills and knowledge. The use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning in the majority of subjects is still not sufficiently well developed for the school to meet National Curriculum requirements in Years 10 and 11 despite this being a key issue in the last inspection. There are no ICT assessment procedures for the majority of students in Years 10 and 11 so the school does not know what, if any, progress is being made in developing ICT competence. The overall management of ICT has been unsatisfactory but recent changes in staffing are enabling the overall management of ICT to be restructured in an attempt to provide a more effective overview and better co-ordinated management of this broad curriculum area.
84. Although there have been a number of improvements in provision since the last inspection there are still some significant shortcomings relating to provision in all years; the use of ICT across the curriculum, particularly in the core subject; and assessment of ICT in Years 10 and 11. Overall improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

85. Provision for Information and communication technology across the curriculum is unsatisfactory overall. The lack of ICT use in subjects was an issue in the last inspection six years ago and there has been insufficient improvement since then. ICT across the curriculum has suffered from a lack of effective coherent leadership and management. The curriculum has not been audited for current use or mapped appropriately to plan further use in subject departments and there is no assessment of the ICT capability of the majority of students in Years 10 and 11. These issues are of particular relevance because of the short-fall in the time available for ICT lessons in Years 7 to 9 and because less than half of students in Years 10 and 11 are able to develop their skills and knowledge in an examination course in an ICT related subject.
86. There is a great deal of variation between subjects in their use of ICT. It is of particular concern that the use of ICT is unsatisfactory in the core subjects. Opportunities for the use of ICT have not been written into schemes of work appropriately to ensure that National Curriculum requirements are met. The installation of a small number of interactive whiteboards is beginning to have a positive impact in some areas.
87. There are a few strengths. The use of ICT is outstanding in physical education as part of the school's sports college status. Particularly good use is made of digital cameras and video for the analysis of movement. The availability of good technical support in the department is very valuable. ICT is also used very well in the music department, particularly for composition. In other departments, even where ICT opportunities are written into schemes of work, its use is often not consistent between teachers. Computers have to be shared by students in many ICT rooms. Room layout and window blinds are inadequate. Computers and other ICT equipment in departments such as mathematics and science are often old and in other cases they are not connected to the school computer network. These problems over accommodation and resources act as a disincentive to many teachers.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is enthusiastic and challenging, stemming from an expert knowledge of how pupils learn.
- Pupils are productive and achieve well when teachers' expectations are high.
- Leadership is reflective, innovative and self-critical and indicates a clear vision of the development of the subject.
- There is a lack of curriculum time in Years 8 and 9.
- Pupils are unaware when they are being taught citizenship topics.

Commentary

88. Teaching and learning are good. Classroom resources are well-planned and effective. Activities and demands are well matched to the needs of the pupils. The best examples are in Years 7 and 8 where pupils are engrossed in their work. Pupils respond very well to interesting tasks. Time is used very productively for both independent and team work. In a Year 11 lesson on industrial location pupils took charge of their learning by selecting information, making decisions and reporting the results.
89. Pupil attitudes are very positive where teachers are effective in planning and managing a lesson. However, when pupils are poorly organised, some take the opportunity to achieve less. Despite this the majority still work well.
90. Attainment recorded by teachers at the end of Year 9 in 2003 was well above the national average and above average compared to similar schools. Standards at GCSE in 2003 were well above the national average and in line with results obtained in other subjects in the school. However, standards in lessons across the age range are above average, with the highest standards in Years 7 and 8.
91. Achievement is good because pupils quickly acquire a good knowledge of places and geographical concepts. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on the regions of France, pupils worked at a good pace to prepare and share information on their own region knowing that they would be tested on the results. Here, very good progress was made because of good planning and very positive attitudes. Good gains in knowledge were made in the test. Similarly in a Year 8 lesson on child labour in poor countries, pupils used information supplied very effectively and gave very good quality presentations to the whole class. This created very good opportunities to enhance literacy skills. In a Year 10 lesson, the high quality of the pupils' responses showed good gains had been made since Year 9 in their knowledge and understanding, such as when discussing the issue of sustainable tourism. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and benefit particularly well when there is in-class support.
92. Leadership is very good because procedures are kept under review and there is a strong focus on raising achievement. Management is good because the subject is organised efficiently. The monitoring of achievement is developing well for individual pupils so that they know how they can improve. For example, the results of regular assessments are recorded on a bar chart in pupils' exercise books which gives a National Curriculum level topic by topic, as well as setting targets for improvement. This also enables teachers

to respond more effectively to individual pupil needs by, for example, providing classroom resources for lower ability pupils. The quality of the provision in geography has improved since the last inspection because teaching is more varied, tasks are more challenging and pupils are given ample opportunities to participate actively in lessons.

93. Only one hour per week is allocated to geography in Years 8 and 9. This is insufficient to ensure effective coverage of the curriculum and adversely affects the number of pupils who choose to take geography at GCSE.
94. Citizenship is identified in schemes of work and on some lesson plans but there is no feedback to pupils or to the citizenship co-ordinator of which elements of the curriculum individual pupils have covered.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have a very good command of their subject, plan effectively and encourage pupils appropriately.
- Pupils work well both by themselves and in teams and are given ample opportunities to participate.
- There is a lack of curriculum time in Years 8 and 9.
- Leadership is competent and committed and lines of responsibility are shared to ensure effectiveness.
- Pupils are unaware of when and if they are covering citizenship topics.
- Insufficient ICT activities are built into schemes of work.

Commentary

95. Teaching and learning are both very good with the best examples seen in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is stimulating, enthusiastic and consistently challenging, stemming from expert knowledge of how to teach and how pupils learn. Teaching methods are varied and imaginative and teachers maintain the pupils' attention and interest skilfully. Teachers constantly check that pupils have understood unfamiliar historical terms and they skilfully emphasise main points. This enables pupils to discuss and explain issues well.
96. Time is used productively for independent and collaborative work. Pupils work well together in teams and this enables each pupil to develop their particular strengths. For example, teachers encourage pupils to speak in front of the whole class while others evaluate each other's work constructively.
97. Attainment recorded by teachers at the end of Year 9 in 2003 was well above the national average and in line with results in similar schools. Standards in lessons are well above average in Years 7 to 9. Pupils can give a balanced view of issues. Achievement is very good because, for example, pupils learn to interpret sources very effectively. In a Year 9 lesson on the study of Ireland, pupils were able to assimilate evidence from a detailed source on the Easter uprising. Standards at GCSE in 2003 were above the national average but below the results obtained in other subjects in the school. This was due to staff changes and the introduction of a new examination course. However, standards in

lessons in Years 10 and 11 are above average and achievement is good because pupils have improved their knowledge and understanding considerably since Year 9. For example, they can use their skills effectively to identify the reasons for American involvement in Vietnam. Pupils with special educational needs make satisfactory progress and benefit particularly well when there is in-class support.

98. Only one hour per week is allocated to history in Years 8 and 9. This is insufficient to ensure effective coverage of the curriculum and improve progress and levels of achievement in the time available.
99. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The leadership has the capacity to effect change. Teachers monitor the performance of the subject and tackle its weaknesses. They are keeping up with curriculum development and change well, for example, producing new schemes of work, standardising assessments and in ensuring that good contributions are made to pupils' literacy development. However, insufficient use is made of ICT in the curriculum to support pupils' learning. The quality of provision has improved since the last inspection. Teachers have ensured that teaching styles have become more imaginative. This has ensured the popularity of the subject and that it is a popular choice at GCSE level. Teachers use the results of regular assessments to improve target setting. This enables teachers to respond more effectively to individual needs by, for example, improving provision of classroom resources for lower ability pupils.
100. As in geography, citizenship is identified in schemes of work and on some lesson plans but there is no feedback to pupils or to the citizenship co-ordinator of which elements of the curriculum individual pupils have covered.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and pupils learn well.
- Good leadership and well qualified teachers have contributed to major improvements since the last inspection.
- Pupils develop reasoned and reflective responses to spiritual, moral, social and cultural issues.
- Standards are well above average for full course GCSE pupils.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve less well than in Years 10 and 11 as some tasks lack sufficient challenge.

Commentary

101. Results in the full course GCSE in 2003 were well above the national average and for the short course were above average. Pupils have varied levels of knowledge and understanding on entry to the school. They progress to average levels by Year 9, and achieve well by Year 11, with no identifiable differences in the achievement of boys and girls. Standards are average in Year 9 and are above average in Year 11. Younger pupils can describe Buddhist beliefs and teachings, and Muslim practices and lifestyles. Higher-attaining pupils make informed responses to issues such as euthanasia and the Holocaust. They identify their own feelings, such as when a pupil wrote, 'I believe I'm loved when people accept me for who I am.' Lower-attaining pupils showed good effort in designing a religious education garden, using symbolism accurately and imaginatively. Achievement is satisfactory by Year 9 and good by Year 11. Older pupils produce very detailed well argued writing, informed by reference to religious belief. Lower-attaining pupils could apply some Christian teachings and responded to moral issues arising from the Holocaust.
102. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. Teachers have, in the main, expert subject knowledge. They plan lessons well and engage the interest of pupils who are keen to answer questions, sometimes generating their own questions. A wide range of teaching strategies are employed including role-play, use of music, two and three-dimensional art, and the use of artefacts. Year 9 pupils were stimulated, shocked and enthused in an excellent simulation relating to Nazi Germany. Every pupil made a response and pupils were guided to deeper understanding through careful questioning. Year 10 pupils experienced a Sikh wedding through a realistic simulation. They then applied their understanding to a video extract, deepening their knowledge and understanding of the Sikh religion and of cultural traditions.
103. Leadership and management are very good, so that all issues identified in the last inspection report have been dealt with successfully. Leadership is reflective and focused on improvement. GCSE religious studies is now a core subject in Years 10 and 11. Teaching and learning are carefully monitored, areas for improvement identified and individual staff supported to improve. Well qualified teachers have been employed and a cohesive team shares in developing the curriculum. Some teaching for younger pupils, such as that on Islam, does not yet have sufficient challenge to take pupils beyond knowledge and understanding of beliefs and traditions, to the higher attainment levels. Assessment comments are very effective for GCSE pupils but targets for pupils in Years 7 to 9 are often limited in indicating to pupils how they can improve.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good; teachers and support staff motivate pupils to work hard and achieve well.
- Pupils' behaviour and attitudes are good and make a positive contribution to good achievement and good standards of attainment.
- The curriculum is broad, balanced and inclusive and supports learning for all pupils.
- Departmental improvement planning, monitoring and evaluation are currently underdeveloped and impede progress.

Commentary

104. Standards are above average. Pupils enter the school with a wide range of experience in design and technology and with standards that are in line with the national average. Throughout Years 7 to 9 work seen indicates developing skills, confidence and competence, so that by the end of Year 9 standards are above national expectations. Courses in Years 10 and 11 effectively build on skills, knowledge and understanding. Work seen indicates a degree of sophistication in the use of the design process, so that GCSE results are significantly higher than national average results, particularly in the higher grades. Achievement is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Girls achieve higher results than boys, particularly at GCSE where girls achieve more high grades than boys. The curriculum has been revised to appeal more equally to both, increasing levels of motivation for pupils. Pupils' behaviour and attitude are good. Teacher support for pupils is good, including pupils with special educational needs and English as an additional language.
105. Teaching overall is good, with many examples of very good teaching. Teachers' high expectations, good subject knowledge, behaviour management and workshop organisation supports pupils' independent learning effectively. In the very good lessons, teachers challenge pupils intellectually and creatively. These lessons are well planned, ensuring that pupils understand what they are learning. The teaching of ICT, literacy and numeracy is satisfactory overall, but not well focused or detailed in planning. Specific units of work for ICT develop skills which pupils can use as a resource for learning; however, there is insufficient ICT planned into all units of work. Very good lessons incorporate a range of activities which develop literacy and numeracy skills effectively. Pupils' learning is good; they enjoy lessons, take active interest and are keen to finish their work to a high standard. The highest achieving pupils in Years 10 and 11 complete additional work of their own accord, adding breadth and depth to excellently presented design folders.
106. Leadership and management are both good. The head of faculty leads by example, has high expectations and clearly values the work of teachers, support staff and pupils. He has ensured policy, planning and assessment procedures are satisfactory and has set up an effective refurbishment programme, improving accommodation and resources. Improvement planning, monitoring and evaluation do not currently include sufficient focus on identifying and sharing most effective teaching practice, continuing professional development or curriculum review. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Standards have risen, teaching has improved and there are many opportunities for pupils to handle and evaluate products made by others. Accommodation and resources issues have been very largely tackled; food technology rooms have been completely refurbished.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

107. Four lessons of **drama** were seen during the inspection in Years 9 to 11. Standards of performance were below average, reflecting pupils' limited experience of drama in Years 7 to 9. The short course undertaken by pupils in Year 9 does not equip them with the skills they need to perform effectively. Pupils in a Year 10 lesson were still struggling with the basic techniques of using body language, space, levels and facial expression. The Year 10 and 11 pupils seen lack confidence in their work and many are obviously self-conscious and inhibited. In the Year 10 lesson this led to some silly behaviour. Standards of written work are above average, reflecting pupils' linguistic and literary knowledge and understanding. Performance at GCSE is below the standards achieved by pupils in other subjects and fewer pupils achieve the higher grades than the national average.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The generally very good teaching challenges and engages pupils and leads to high achievement in lessons.
- The strong teaching team is led very effectively, promoting high standards in the department.
- The very positive attitudes and generally very good behaviour of pupils leads to an enjoyable and productive environment for learning.
- There are insufficient appropriate resources and teaching skills to give pupils the opportunity to explore the innovative field of computer art.
- Some aspects of the accommodation and staffing are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

108. Pupils, including those with special educational needs, achieve very well in lessons, as a result of the very good teaching in the department. Teachers are very knowledgeable and have high expectations of both work and behaviour. They are committed to their subject and work hard to ensure that all pupils work to their individual potential. They often adapt their methods and simplify worksheet resources to enable younger pupils to understand and appreciate better the work of artists past and present. Fine art is taught particularly well, and pupils' high quality sketchbooks show ample evidence of this. Pupils research very effectively and write extensively about artists and their work. Annotation is not marked with sufficient care to ensure that the department fully supports the school's literacy initiative. Pupils are generally very well behaved, positive and apply themselves to their studies, ensuring that lessons are productive and enjoyable. Small numbers of pupils in some Year 8 classes exhibit low level disruptive behaviour; this is particularly noticeable amongst boys. Occasionally teachers find this difficult to deal with effectively and time is wasted.

109. The department benefits from very good leadership and effective management. The head of department and the assistant head, who carries considerable responsibility for the main school, are very good role models for other staff and for pupils. They have worked through a period of declining standards, to emerge with pupils' GCSE

examination grades above national averages and rising standards throughout the school. Under their leadership, the department has made a very good improvement since the previous inspection.

110. ICT resources for digital art are unsatisfactory, although a room has been set aside for computers. There is a need for further staff training in digital art. Accommodation is spacious, but is not well furnished, has no control over natural light and is poorly maintained overall. The unsatisfactory cleaning of the ceramics areas represents a potential health hazard. The lack of any specialist technician support limits the development of three-dimensional work, particularly in ceramics.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well and have very good attitudes, because teaching engages and motivates highly.
- Very good leadership and management of the subject have secured substantial improvement in provision since the previous inspection.
- Skilled integration of ICT into music lessons in all years contributes to the marked growth in GCSE numbers.
- Pupils have very good extra-curricular opportunities to develop their musical skills.

Commentary

111. Standards in Year 9, like the teachers' assessments in 2003, are above average. Standards in Year 11 are well above average and in line with the GCSE results of 2002, although above those of 2003. Pupils achieve very well from Years 7 to 9 as well as in Years 10 and 11, because teaching is very good overall. Systematic planning, engaging and communicative presentation and very good use of resources ensure that pupils, especially in Years 7 to 9, learn and consolidate key concepts very well. At the same time, teaching develops pupils' practical musical skills and promotes very good social interaction through paired and group activities, enabling pupils to work at different levels according to their ability. Teachers support pupils with special educational needs well, although the lack of teaching assistants inhibits learning in a few lessons. Inconsistent note-taking in lessons slows progress in practical projects running over several lessons, a deficiency linked to the department's policy of not setting homework regularly. Insistence on very high standards of behaviour and well-established routines consolidate the pupils' very good attitudes. On-going feedback in lessons is very good, although there is some inconsistency in the quality of marking and monitoring of written work. Manageable systems for recording pupils' progress have recently been established. Evaluating the impact of these in further improving teaching and learning has yet to be undertaken. Teaching seen in Years 10 and 11 is good, although lacking sufficient critical and focused intervention in practical work to raise aural awareness for middle-attaining pupils.
112. The provision has improved very well since the previous inspection. Music now has a high profile and a strong team spirit. The use of ICT in all years enables pupils to develop skills of improvisation and composition particularly well, and helps attract more pupils to the GCSE course, especially boys. Boys predominate in Year 11 and comprise the bulk of higher-attaining pupils, contrary to national trends. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is very well designed to develop pupils' musical skills, but the different musical styles of multi-cultural Britain are under-represented, as are cross-school initiatives, such as citizenship. The relationship with the county music services, based at the school, is mutually supportive. This facilitates access to high quality instrumental tuition for talented pupils, and very good liaison with feeder primaries for continuity in tuition and ensemble playing. It also provides extension, through groups like the county youth orchestra, for those pupils whose skills are developed through the school's very high quality, varied and very well attended extra-curricular music making. Public performances promote very close and constructive relationships with the wider community. The subject promotes spiritual, moral, social and cultural development very well. However, reports to parents do not give clear and consistent indication of how pupils can improve and the library is under-resourced for following up topics covered in class.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good; teachers are very knowledgeable and plan lessons using a range of activities that allows all groups of pupils to learn very well.
- Teaching and learning are greatly enhanced by the excellent quality of specialist facilities, although the teaching of GCSE theory work lacks the benefit of a permanent base.
- Standards at the end of Years 9 and 11 are consistently above the national average.
- The subject leader and director of sport have a very strong commitment to improvement and success.
- The excellent extra-curricular and Sports College initiatives provide opportunities for pupils of all ages to extend their learning.
- Curricular provision for outdoor education is underdeveloped.

Commentary

113. Standards in lessons and in work by Year 9 and Year 11 pupils are above national averages and rising. There is no significant difference between the standards of boys and girls. Pupils are achieving well across all years. Year 11 pupils' examination results in physical education, are consistently above the national average. Pupils achieve better grades than those in most of their other subjects. Students with special educational needs, achieve well. High attaining pupils, including the talented, achieve very well and are successful in a wide range of sports at county, regional and national levels.
114. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in all years. Teachers are very knowledgeable and manage pupils very well. Teaching is very well-planned; lessons include a challenging range of activities that enable pupils to build on previous learning. Work is planned to suit all pupils. For example, in a Year 8 badminton lesson, lower-attaining pupils made very good progress, because the teacher modified tasks, used demonstrations and provided short-handle rackets. The learning of higher-attaining pupils, including the talented, is accelerated by extension tasks, grouping and the excellent extra-curricular sports programme. Teachers provide opportunities for independent learning in a high proportion of lessons. In a Year 10 health-related activities lesson, pupils planned, measured and evaluated their performance. Learning is less effective in a few lessons where the teaching is more prescriptive. Teaching and learning in GCSE theory work also lack the stimulation of a subject-specific teaching base. Pupils' learning is enhanced by their very positive attitudes. Participation rates are high and relationships very good. Most pupils, across all years, show above-average basic skills. They improve their numerical skills through opportunities to score, measure and record performance. Teachers emphasise key words and are adept in their use of questioning. These approaches improve the technical vocabulary, speaking skills and listening ability of all pupils. Pupils' ICT skills are enhanced through access to the Sports College's very good ICT resources, in particular the sophisticated video-analysis facilities.
115. The subject leader and director of sport are providing very good leadership and management; they have a very strong commitment to improvement and success and are ably supported by a dedicated team of specialists. Very good procedures are in place to

monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of teaching, standards and provision. Sports College status is making a very positive impact across the school and the wider community. The Sports College development plan is very clear and well focused, with measurable outcomes. The department is very well positioned to move forward and achieve the aims of raising standards, supporting development in the link schools and fulfilling its community role. Specific enhancements for the school include a greater range of courses, increased specialist staffing levels, enhanced facilities and an excellent programme of extra-curricular activities. GCSE dance has been successfully introduced this year through a Sports College initiative. The new dance studio and excellent teaching of the specialist dance co-ordinator, create a stimulating learning environment. Pupils in Year 10 GCSE dance are achieving very well, and their standards are above national expectations. The sports leadership courses are providing well-qualified volunteers to organise and promote schools' and community sports events. The management of improvement since the last inspection has been very good. In order to improve further, provision for outdoor education aspects of the physical education programme need to be expanded.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

116. The school programme for PSHE is planned largely by pastoral staff and taught by form tutors once each week. The programme also encompasses aspect of careers education in addition to elements of the citizenship programme. Teaching of **PSHE** observed during the inspection was never less than satisfactory, was good in most lessons and very good in three. Each of these lessons, one in Year 7, one in Year 9 and the other in Year 11 were planned and resourced well. Time was used well and the teachers built upon their already strong and supportive relationships with the pupils in their classes. After watching a video, Year 7 pupils worked supportively in groups to produce engaging presentations on personal care. Following a session where visitors to the school discussed the roles they play in their companies, Year 9 pupils concentrated well on identifying the professional skills required by them in their jobs. Meanwhile, Year 11 pupils were engaged in individual interviews with their form tutors and other staff on their report grades and how they might achieve their GCSE targets. All three sessions were extremely valuable in their different ways and contributed much to the pupils' personal development.
117. Very few lessons identified as **citizenship** take place and there was no specific work available to analyse. The two lessons seen, indicate standards which are broadly average. Pupils have some opportunities to develop their skills of participation and responsible action through form councils, although there is no school council through which they can fully exercise these skills. There is no co-ordinated assessment of the work done in citizenship across the curriculum; consequently, it is not possible to judge how pupils are achieving in relation to National Curriculum statements about becoming informed citizens. Objectives are generally not stated in lessons and so pupils do not understand when they are studying citizenship. Although there are some sample textbooks, class sets of books have not been purchased and resources overall are unsatisfactory. The co-ordinators and teachers delivering citizenship have received no training. Leadership and management are unsatisfactory. The statutory requirements for citizenship as set out in the National Curriculum, which have been in place since August 2002, are not being fulfilled. A decision has been made to teach citizenship through other subjects in the curriculum, rather than as discrete lessons. An audit has been carried out to determine which subjects contribute to the citizenship curriculum through

their lessons and schemes of work. Some additional items have been added to the PSHE programme, including looking at how magistrates work. However, further development to ensure that the curriculum is adequately covered and progression is assured has not been done, nor has equal access across the range of subjects been monitored. The development of schemes of work and supporting documentation is at an early stage. The school has recently introduced Year 9 reporting on citizenship, based on judgements made by form tutors rather than on a sound assessment system.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003.

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
Art and design	3	66.7	80.1	33.3	23.7	30.0	29.9
Biology	12	66.7	65.2	8.3	11.1	19.2	20.6
Business studies	7	85.7	76.4	14.3	16.3	30.0	26.2
Chemistry	10	70.0	72.7	10.0	13.9	20.0	24.1
Drama	2	100	86.5	0	9.6	25.0	30.6
Economics	3	100	73.6	0	20.1	30.0	26.4
English/English language	13	84.6	82.9	23.1	17.5	30.8	28.7
English literature	1	100	85.9	0	19.1	30.0	30.2
French	2	100	78.2	0	18.9	25.0	27.6
Design and technology	8	62.5	74.9	12.5	15.1	22.5	25.3
General studies	31	90.3	73.9	29.0	17.8	35.2	25.7
Geography	13	53.8	74.3	7.7	19.8	18.5	26.5
German	2	100	81.5	0	19.3	40.0	28.9
History	7	100	80.7	28.6	19.5	34.3	28.6
Information technology	5	80.0	67.0	20.0	10.9	26.0	21.4
Mathematics	17	64.7	61.9	11.8	17.1	20.0	22.1
Music	2	100	86.5	50.0	21.4	35.0	30.7
Other social studies	17	88.2	69.7	41.2	16.7	36.5	24.1
Physics	12	91.7	68.6	16.7	14.4	29.2	22.7
Sociology	12	100	71.8	16.7	18.4	32.5	25.4
Sports studies	1	100	73.3	0	11.4	30.0	23.1

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	18	100	98.6	83.3	50.2	106.7	87.5
Biology	17	100	96.4	29.4	39.2	74.1	78.6
Business studies	38	100	98.7	76.3	36.8	102.1	80.1
Chemistry	16	100	97.6	31.3	49.0	73.8	84.9
Classical studies	3	100	99.5	100	55.9	106.7	90.9
Drama	8	100	99.5	12.5	40.1	70.0	83.6
Economics	12	100	98.9	83.3	52.0	105.0	88.3

English/English language	23	100	99.4	34.8	36.3	78.3	80.9
English literature	12	100	99.5	58.3	46.5	91.7	86.5
French	11	100	98.8	72.7	51.5	101.8	87.6
Design and technology	31	100	97.8	58.1	35.0	94.8	77.9
General studies	31	100	94.7	64.5	31.0	93.5	73.1
Geography	24	100	98.7	45.8	44.5	79.2	84.0
German	7	100	98.4	57.1	47.9	97.1	84.8
History	41	100	99.0	61.0	44.6	89.8	84.6
Information technology	19	89.5	95.6	10.5	24.6	55.8	69.5
Mathematics	42	100	96.7	66.7	55.6	92.9	88.8
Music	6	100	98.8	16.7	38.9	76.7	81.1
Other social studies	54	100	97.4	53.7	42.7	90.4	81.8
Physics	17	100	96.7	52.9	44.6	95.3	81.7
Religious studies	7	100	98.8	85.7	46.7	102.9	85.6
Sociology	34	100	98.2	76.5	44.3	100.6	83.6
Spanish	5	100	98.3	80.0	50.2	100.0	86.9
Sports studies	8	100	98.0	25.0	30.9	67.5	75.2

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

118. English and French were inspected in detail. Lessons were also observed in German, Latin and Spanish. The most recent A Level results in both German and Spanish are substantially above the national average as are the 2003 AS Level results in German.
119. A very good **German** lesson was seen in Year 12 where the teacher was able to create a positive ethos in which the students were happy to attempt to express themselves in German; they made very good progress as a result. Standards were well above average. An inventive game was used to conclude the lesson and practise the subjunctive tense. A very well taught Year 13 **Latin** lesson was observed. The students and teacher were very comfortable in each other's company. The students learned very well by being very focused, using their extensive prior learning and being highly articulate about what they did and did not know. The teacher used wit very successfully and imposed a very good level of demand, which both challenged and encouraged the students. The teacher had planned well a Year 13 **Spanish** lesson that was well taught and in which the students showed high levels of concentration, independence, perseverance and maturity. Standards were above average and the students' knowledge of grammar was very good. Spanish was used by the teacher as the normal means of communication, but the students did not take advantage of every opportunity that presented itself to use the language for incidental communication.

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average in both English language and English literature.
- Very good teaching and excellent marking are leading to highly motivated students.
- The subject benefits from very effective leadership and management.
- The excellent curriculum is well suited to the students' aspirations.

Commentary

120. Standards are well above average and achievement is very good. Students enter Year 12 with well above average standards, including very good literacy skills. In the language and literature courses in 2003, students' performance was average or better at both AS and A Level. Students performed better than in their other subjects. Results in the combined language and literature course were below average and have fluctuated over time. The results in 2003 improved after remarking. In lessons and work seen, standards reflected the above results in the language and literature courses, but were higher than examination results would suggest in the combined course. Teaching and learning are very good in all three courses.
121. By the end of Year 13, students are very articulate, capable of listening carefully and responding quickly. Their vocabulary is very wide and supplemented by the constant learning of technical terms. The range of texts studied is wide and challenging, and students have very good reading skills. In all courses, students undertake much research, particularly on the Internet. Essay writing skills continue to develop well. The importance of drafting is emphasised and, as a result, students' work improves steadily. By the end of Year 13, students trace complex themes to a considered conclusion, using quotations and references well.
122. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have an excellent command of the subject and convey their own enthusiasms most effectively. As a result, students too are enthusiastic and prepared to work and act independently. They acquire a very good depth of knowledge and understanding. Lessons are carefully planned to include challenge, but also to support lower-attaining students who might not grasp a point immediately. Students know their targets and are helped by excellent marking. Comments are detailed and very specific in explaining how to improve. High attaining students in particular benefit from the degree of challenge.
123. Despite the absence of the head of department, the members of staff responsible for the sixth form provide very good leadership. Aims and ethos are very clear and well shared, which results in very good teamwork. Teachers are committed and work hard to support students. Every effort was made to discover the reasons for the poorer results of the combined language and literature course, although without discovering a definitive reason. Grades were raised after appeal to the examination board. There is no evidence of formal monitoring but, nonetheless, the standards of marking are uniformly very high. The department is very well organised and runs smoothly. Curriculum choice is considerable and the syllabus incorporates varied and challenging texts. Activities such as theatre visits, debating and journalism, plus coursework and revision sessions enrich the curriculum still further. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good because high levels of attainment have been maintained and improved. Most teaching is now very good and students make very good progress.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

124. Language and literacy are good in the sixth form. By the end of Year 13, students are highly articulate. Many are quick-thinking and responsive when replying or explaining because they have listened carefully. Students continue to develop the very good skills acquired previously. Technical terms are well taught in all subjects. Students have an extensive vocabulary. Their comprehension skills are good and they understand complex

texts. Subjects such as English and history pay much attention to fostering essay writing skills. Students produce well organised and structured writing that meets the demands of most subjects.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well, gaining above average standards.
- Teachers are highly qualified, have excellent knowledge of their subject and make a good range of resources and enrichment activities available to students.
- Day-to-day management is effective, but the department has no development plans.

Commentary

125. A Level results in 2002 were above the national average and the school did well in comparison with other schools. This improved further in 2003, when the school did very well in comparison with other schools. Standards observed in lessons and in students' folders confirm this general picture. Male students perform as well as females, at times participating more actively in lessons. Students perform to an above average standard across most areas, especially in extended reading and writing. Students' achievement is good because they are generally working to capacity and have made good progress since starting the course, despite the much higher level of challenge they encounter when transferring from GCSE to AS Level work. In lessons, they tend to be dependent on their teacher for guidance and rarely take the initiative. However, their completed written work demonstrates that they can work independently if they have to. The number of students who chose AS level French last year rose.
126. The standard of teaching and learning is good. Teachers provide a range of stimulus material for students to learn from, including various types of media, such as the press, satellite television and the Internet. Consequently, statistical information is up-to-date and students acquire current information on relevant issues ranging from science and technology to education and tourism. Assessment is helpful and students report that they know how well they are doing because teachers provide them with helpful feedback every few weeks. All teachers have excellent French language skills and use French throughout the lessons. Students recognise the benefit they gain from this, but the promotion of speaking skills suffers when lessons are too teacher-centred. Students report that they found the leap from GCSE harder than expected, but the department provides good support which helps them to meet this challenge; there is little sign that any of them struggle unduly.
127. The leadership and management of the course are satisfactory overall. Various teachers share the teaching load; this is managed effectively by means of good communication and careful mapping of the course, so no difficulties arise. Students benefit from a residential trip to Belgium and other social events organised by teachers. A weakness of management is that there is no improvement plan, despite the fact that sixth form developments have been identified as an area for development. There is also no written record of the faculty's policies and procedures for sixth form work. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Standards are still above average and students continue to make good progress.

MATHEMATICS

128. The large number of students studying mathematics courses in the sixth form means that a wide range of alternatives can be offered. Students can study pure mathematics with either mechanics or statistics. Further mathematics is also available. AS and A Level statistics is now offered as a discrete subject taken by a small but growing number. As this course has only been running for just over one year, no examination results are available. It was also not possible to observe any lessons, as the main focus for the inspection was on the large number of mathematics courses.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards and A Level results have improved in recent years, but they fell slightly in 2003.
- Teachers use their high level of subject expertise to teach challenging lessons that inspire and motivate the students, although they find explanations confusing in a small number of lessons.
- The students are highly committed to their studies and have a drive to be successful.
- Students are not always clear about how well they are doing as targets and steps for improvement are not shared with them on a regular and systematic basis.

Commentary

129. Students' achieve well because teaching and learning are good and they work hard at their studies. Most make good progress from their GCSE results and exceed their predicted grades and targets. Those with higher entry standards make particularly good progress; for those predicted at C grade and below progress is more varied. Until 2003, results at A Level had risen more rapidly than nationally. A Level results have been well above average in recent years, although there was a slight fall in 2003 from a high point the year before. In spite of this fall to above average results, the same good progress was made by students as in previous years. AS Level results in 2003 represented particularly good progress and were higher than in 2002. These higher standards are evident in the current Year 13, where standards are well above average. There are no significant differences in the performance of male and female students, although more females combine pure mathematics with statistics while more male students take the combination with mechanics. Students studying further mathematics are benefiting from small group tuition, but do not always have the benefit that sharing ideas with other students might bring. The small number of students in the GCSE retake group are also achieving well. Results of modules already completed show them all on target to improve their Year 11 result by at least one grade.

130. Teaching and learning varies from very good to a small amount that is unsatisfactory. Many lessons are well taught; they generate a high level of commitment from the students, who learn new ideas quickly. Lessons are well structured and challenging. In most cases, teachers use their high degree of subject expertise to good effect by providing clear explanations of new theory. Teaching is directed at the most able with individual support given to any students who are having difficulty. This subject expertise is also evident in that any problems occurring are tackled from a variety of approaches. Teachers generally follow a common pattern of direct teaching of new theory with worked examples, followed by student practice of techniques. This works well for most, but is somewhat limiting particularly when explanations lack clarity and the students are not sufficiently engaged through questioning or discussion. Confusion occurs during these lessons, but the students persevere and concentrate, trying hard to understand what they

are being taught. Book resources are satisfactory and the students use graphic calculators regularly, but do not have sufficient access to the use of other ICT to support teaching and learning.

131. Overall improvement since the last inspection is good. The subject is well led with a sharp focus on trying to improve the students' achievement. For example, students are given preparation material for completion during the summer holiday before embarking on the courses, covering some of the basic techniques needed. Lunchtime revision classes are also held for those struggling to keep up with the fast pace of the courses. Staff share ideas, and the subject leader provides valuable and effective guidance on how topics might be better approached. However, the team teaching in the sixth form is large and the lack of systematic processes to monitor their work is leading to some weaknesses going unchecked. The management of the subject is good. Target-setting for the students has recently been introduced, but has scope for further development. Students' predictions are not shared with them as a matter of course and then used to inform their subsequent work and track their progress. Marking and assessments do not use targets and predictions to give a clear picture to students of how they might improve. However, teachers know the students well and achievement benefits from this knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses.

Mathematics across the curriculum

132. The majority of sixth form students have very good mathematical skills, which they use to good effect in their different subjects. Where there are weaknesses, students have the opportunity to retake GCSE or to study for a key skills qualification. This opportunity is taken up by a small number of students. Mathematical skills are put to particularly good use in the sciences, particularly in physics, where the majority of students are also studying mathematics A Level. Physics staff also take the opportunity to teach the specific mathematical skills needed in a topic if they have not yet been tackled already in mathematics. This enables learning to have meaning, as the application of mathematics is visible immediately in a physics context. Learning in other subjects such as geography, psychology and sociology benefits from the skills of students' who are studying statistics. Although all students do not continue with a mathematics course, none are excluded by their skills from making progress in other subjects.

SCIENCE

Biology

Provision in biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching from subject specialists, allied to very positive attitudes from the students, has led to a steady improvement in standards in recent years.
- A high proportion of students achieve A Level passes, although the proportion achieving the highest grades is below average.
- There are not enough opportunities for students to use computers to enhance their learning.
- Marking is inconsistent and does not give students enough guidance on how to improve.

Commentary

133. Results in the 2003 AS and A Level examinations were average, with most students achieving the results that would be expected on the basis of their GCSE grades. A Level results were slightly down on the previous year, but AS Level results improved. All the Year 13 students attained A Level passes, although the proportion of A and B grades was below average.
134. Few of the students taking biology in the sixth form have passes at the highest grade in GCSE examinations, but good teaching and very positive student attitudes ensure that achievement is satisfactory for the majority. A knowledgeable head of department has provided good leadership and support for the other teachers, so that lessons are usually well organised and pitched at the right level. Teaching is good overall. Teaching was very good in half the lessons seen but in one lesson the level of challenge was below what would be expected for A Level work. This was appropriate for the introductory work on the topic but took too long to complete, leading to a slow pace of learning. In the most successful lessons, teachers use their very good subject knowledge to teach challenging and interesting lessons, so that average standards are maintained, with the students demonstrating good understanding of key concepts. They respond well to such teaching, effectively making their own notes and keeping very good records of the work they have done. A system of assessment that identifies areas for improvement has recently been introduced; this has helped students to focus on targets to raise the level of their work. However, routine marking is inconsistent and does not always give this level of useful feedback.
135. Many opportunities are provided for the students to develop their communication and mathematical skills; they have no difficulty in dealing with technical terms and mathematical methods in biology. However, there is little evidence in their work of the development of computer skills and this aspect of learning is unsatisfactory. Although lessons in biology are generally well planned and taught effectively, the starts of some lessons are delayed because teachers have to travel from the main site. When this happens, students behave responsibly and make use of the time to organise their notes or copy-up work, so that the quality of learning is not seriously affected.
136. Day-to-day management of the subject is good and resources are appropriate. This helps to ensure the quality of learning. Students are very positive about the teaching and support they receive. A very high proportion of the students who go on to Year 13 complete the course and achieve a pass at A Level. Students with special educational needs are well supported and achieve well. Standards have risen steadily in recent years and arrangements for assessment have been improved. This, together with the maintenance of good teaching and positive student attitudes, represents good improvement since the last inspection.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is some good teaching.
- The use of ICT to strengthen the students' understanding of the subject is limited.

- There is a lack of clear monitoring and evaluation procedures.

Commentary

137. In the 2003 A Level chemistry examination, the Year 13 students achieved results that were below the national average. The results have shown a varied pattern over the last few years, but, the Year 13 students, particularly males, have generally done less well in chemistry than in their other subjects. The Year 12 results for the 2003 AS examination were in line with the national average. Inspection findings show that achievement in lessons is satisfactory overall and that the students are currently operating at standards that are in line with national averages. This is a more positive picture than that shown by the results last year.
138. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The teachers have good subject knowledge. There are some lively questions and answer sessions, which help to probe and challenge understanding. Learning objectives are not always as clear as they might be, so students are sometimes confused about what it is they are expected to have achieved by the end of the lesson. Regular opportunities are provided for the students to develop their practical skills. As a result, they set about their experimental work with confidence, as was seen in a Year 13 lesson where the students were making polymers.
139. There are some constructive interactions between the teachers and individuals so that the students are both encouraged and challenged to explain observations or solutions to problems. In a Year 12 lesson, the teacher enabled the students to develop their understanding of the naming of organic compounds through a systemic development of the key principles underpinning the conventions of nomenclature. They made good progress as a result.
140. The students appreciate the individual support given and respond positively to the challenges set within lessons. They are keen to learn and to do well. While feedback in class is usually constructive, assessment procedures in general are not sufficiently rigorous to enable students to focus on specific areas of weakness. The over-reliance on the one text book for the course means that the needs of some of the weaker students are not fully met. In the one lesson observed where ICT was used, the teacher had not taken sufficient account of the competence of the students' skills in this area. As a result, the students made limited progress in developing their understanding of bond enthalpies.
141. The head of the department has only taken on the post since September 2003. While an analysis of data has been undertaken, there is no systemic approach to monitoring and evaluating the work of the department to inform strategic planning. The procedures for setting targets and the tracking of students' progress are too informal. Leadership is therefore unsatisfactory. However, management is satisfactory, with clear systems in place to ensure the effective day-to-day running of the course. The technical assistant provides good support. The new head of department is showing initiative and has already identified some aspects of provision that he would like to improve, such as tracking the progress of students. He has also recognised that the course being followed does not fully meet the needs of all students and requires a wider range of resources and teaching and learning styles if all students are to maximise their progress. Given the commitment of the new head of chemistry, there is good potential to secure further improvement within the department. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

Physics

Provision in physics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The A Level results have been well above the national average for the last two years.
- The department functions efficiently.
- Lessons are predominantly teacher-led with limited opportunities for students to take greater responsibility for their own learning.
- Monitoring and evaluation are insufficiently rigorous.

Commentary

142. Results in A Level physics have shown a steady improvement over the last five years, and in the 2003 examinations the students achieved results that were well above the national average. The students made comparatively better progress in physics than in their other subjects. Year 12 students who completed the one year AS course in 2003, achieved results that were above the national average. Inspection evidence shows that current standards in Year 13 are above national expectations. The systematic approach to the topics within the course, supplemented by regular opportunities to consolidate knowledge and understanding through practice tests and practical exercises, enables the students to achieve well.
143. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall with some good features. Teachers plan their lessons carefully. Learning objectives are mostly shared with the students at the beginning of the lesson, although this practice is not consistent. Clear expositions are underpinned by good subject knowledge as observed in a Year 13 lesson on nuclear particles, which enabled the students to develop their understanding of quarks. Appropriate opportunities are provided to develop practical and mathematical skills. These sessions require the students to record their observations systematically and then apply their knowledge of physics to explain and evaluate their findings. Questioning is often used to good effect to challenge and probe understanding. Students respond positively and engage with the work conscientiously, entering into some good discussions. Several show that they are thinking deeply about the topic through the perceptive questions that they ask, as in a Year 12 lesson on the photoelectric effect. However, there are missed opportunities to talk to students and check progress while they are engaged in tasks such as copying notes or tackling mathematical problems. In one lesson this was a particular shortcoming.
144. There is evidence that teachers are beginning to try a more varied approach in lessons, as in the Year 13 card game about quarks. However, in general there is a limited range of teaching and learning styles and little use of ICT to broaden the experiences of the students and thus extend both the breadth and depth of their knowledge of the subject. Relationships are generally very good, and the students appreciate the support that they are given both within and outside of lessons. The individual support and encouragement makes a significant contribution to the students' overall achievement.
145. While leadership is satisfactory overall, the management of the department is good. There is a common sense of purpose amongst the team and the teachers are clear about

their responsibilities. The experienced technician provides good support and contributes to the smooth running of the course on a day-to-day basis. Student progress is assessed through regular end of topic tests and outcomes are tracked systematically. Targets are set, but arrangements for sharing these with students to help them gauge how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve are not fully secure. Although examination data has been analysed, monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning has not been undertaken systemically and used to inform the overall strategic development plan of the department. However, the head of department has dealt with shortcomings in ICT provision through the recent acquisition of palm tops and data-logging equipment. These resources have yet to be fully incorporated into the teaching and learning programme. Improvement since the last inspection is good given the steady rise in results; there is a clear commitment to secure further improvement.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are below what they should be on A Level courses, but are good in key skills lessons.
- Many lessons are taught well, but a wider range of strategies would improve learning.
- Weaknesses are being removed by new leadership, although the legacy of poor management still impacts adversely on provision.
- There is insufficient use of ICT to support learning in other subjects, although students make good use outside of lessons.

Commentary

146. Results at A Level fell from 2002 to 2003 when they were well below national results and below what the students achieved in their other subjects. This represented unsatisfactory achievement, with many students not making the progress of which they were capable. The results for those completing the AS course at the end of Year 12 in 2003 were above the national average and represented satisfactory achievement for the students. There has been no consistent pattern to the results by gender over the past few years, but many more males than females have taken the course. Year 12 students are currently working at a satisfactory level, broadly in line with the national average, but Year 13 students are not. Students have the necessary mathematical and language skills to cope with work at this level.
147. Year 12 students who do not already hold a Level 2 qualification in ICT are offered an opportunity to study for key skills certification. Students are encouraged to attend sessions if their skills are less well developed or where they lack experience or confidence. These sessions are well taught, students make rapid progress and they achieve well.
148. Teaching and learning are at least satisfactory in all A Level lessons and good in many of them. Teachers know the subject well and are providing students with a clear framework for learning that matches syllabus and examination requirements. Teachers have recently started to co-ordinate practical and theoretical aspects of the subject; this is helping students to apply their ideas and consolidate their understanding. Students are also

receiving effective feedback on their work, so that with their coursework they know precisely how well they are doing and exactly what they have to do to improve. Discussions with students and a review of their work indicate that this is a much greater rigour than was being applied as recently as last term. This previous lack of focus and direction is the primary cause of the underachievement noted in Year 13. There is a good potential to improve teaching and learning and to raise standards further by developing a wider range of learning strategies as teachers become more experienced with the course. This will require improvements to the accommodation and resources available which, at the moment, are impeding learning.

149. There has been much recent change in the personnel involved with this course. Teachers are new to it and leadership and management of the subject now lies with the head of the design and technology faculty. This new direction is responsible for the improvements in teaching and learning, but the legacy of poor leadership and management is still evident in much of the provision. Further developments are being planned and these too have the potential to impact positively on provision, but at the time of this inspection the impact of leadership and management is unsatisfactory, as is the progress made since the previous inspection.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

150. Students have good access to computers around the sixth form accommodation and there is much autonomous use. For example, many students routinely use ICT to improve the presentation of their notes and coursework and the Internet is often used well for research. There is also some use of the facilities in lessons in other subjects, but overall the use of ICT to support learning across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Access to computer projection facilities is very limited as it is to interactive whiteboards. This deficiency restricts teaching options and limits access to a wide range of valuable teaching resources.

HUMANITIES

Geography, history, psychology, religious studies and sociology were inspected in depth and lessons also observed in government and politics and philosophy. One Year 12 **government and politics** lesson was observed. Excellent modelling by the teacher enabled the students to approach the task of commenting on chosen newspaper articles effectively and at a very high level. One Year 13 **philosophy** lesson was observed. The teacher's confident and expert approach enabled the students to apply very high level thinking skills to an especially challenging section of Aristotle's Ethics.

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students get insufficient guidance on what to do to improve.
- Teaching effectively supports students independently to produce well structured fieldwork and source-based investigations.
- Students use the Internet well to obtain up-to-date case study information.

Commentary

151. Since the last inspection, examination results have improved to above average but declined in 2003. A Level results in 2003 were average and AS level results below average. Female students achieve more of the higher grades than males. School analysis of examination results indicate that the A Level students obtained expected grades from predictions based on their earlier GCSE results. Achievement is satisfactory. Standards in Year 12 are average, with some students not yet progressing beyond GCSE expectations. Standards in Year 13 are average, but the ability range in this group is wide and students are mainly achieving outcomes in line with their previous performance.
152. Teaching is satisfactory. Teaching during the inspection was generally good and students' folders indicate other aspects to be satisfactory. Examination essays are generally set at the end of each unit of work, but marking does not always indicate how to improve. For example, one student was advised of the need to plan the answer while another was informed that they showed good understanding, without any further explanation. There is an imbalance between fact gathering and analysis and evaluation. Relationships with students are good and teachers encourage an interest in human and physical geography. Students co-operate well in problem-solving tasks and have developed satisfactory independent learning skills. There are some shortcomings such as when teaching about wilderness areas lacked impact because of a dated text with poor illustrations. ICT is used for some teaching but a video projector is not used regularly to enhance teaching.
153. The department is satisfactorily led and managed. Leadership is committed but time for leading sixth form geography has been limited because of the priority for developing the curriculum in Years 7 to 9. Departmental monitoring and evaluation usefully identified unsatisfactory arrangements for fieldwork which impacted on achievement and resulted in appropriate action. Monitoring is limited and there is no set timetable for observing teachers or for scrutinising work. There is good teamwork, particularly between pairs of teachers.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in Years 12 and 13 are well above average.
- There is much very good teaching, but some inconsistency in marking.
- Students are well motivated and work independently.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- The curriculum offers a varied choice although there is little use of ICT except for research.

Commentary

154. Standards are well above average and achievement is very good. In AS Level examinations, results were above average in 2002 and 2003. The proportion of A and B grades in A Level examinations was well above average in both years, although the 2003

results were lower. Nearly all students obtain a grade and often one that is above their predicted grade.

155. Students enter Year 12 with well above average literacy and historical skills. These provide a very good basis for sixth form learning. By the end of Year 13, students have a thorough knowledge and a very good understanding of their topics. All understand the importance of evidence to support their arguments. High attaining students compare and evaluate sources in detail. These students are particularly quick to link evidence to their own knowledge, thus forming an overview. Essay writing is well developed. Students can analyse various strands of a topic and bring them to a considered conclusion.
156. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Teachers know their subject very well and convey their own enthusiasm. Students respond well by working hard and independently. Lessons are planned for challenge but, at the same time, support and encouragement are offered. Students with special educational needs progress very well because teachers ensure that methods support them by, for example, writing key words on the board throughout the lesson. Where teaching and learning are less effective is in lessons where activities are confined to reading the text book, exposition and note taking. Almost all students enjoy discussion and participate fully.
157. Teachers use school data well to track progress. There is some variation in marking. There are examples of excellent marking with detailed comments explaining how to improve, but others which are less helpful.
158. Leadership and management are very good. The department overcame staffing changes last year with minimal impact on attainment. Teachers share the commitment to achievement and work hard as a team to help students. The curriculum is planned as a whole from Year 10 and offers excellent breadth and choice. History conferences and outside speakers broaden experiences. Students use much ICT for research, but the department is aware of the need to teach other uses. Since the last inspection, improvement has been very good. High standards in lessons and examinations have been maintained and other shortcomings tackled successfully. Achievement is now very good and there is much very good, indeed some excellent, teaching.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good planning and enthusiastic teaching promote good achievement at the end of Year 13.
- Very good relationships and students' positive attitudes contribute significantly to progress in lessons.
- Effective procedures for assessing students' work, together with very good support and guidance, promote good learning.

Commentary

159. Standards are above average, with the standards of female students above those of males. The 2003 A Level results were similar to the above average results obtained in

2002. Female students obtained significantly more of the higher A or B grades than males, although all obtained grades in the A to E range. AS Level results were also above average with the same differences in standards between males and females. The differences in performance reflect differences in standards on entry to the course and both male and female students are achieving equally well.

160. Inspection evidence shows standards in Years 12 and 13 to be above course expectations. The quality of students' oral and written work is very good. Students' files show clear progression in the development of their knowledge and understanding of the theoretical foundations of the subject. Coursework shows a very good understanding of the principles of quantitative research and the use of statistical techniques. Students show a high level of enthusiasm for the subject. They are willing to grasp new ideas and concepts, and in discussion, they express their points of view thoughtfully and without rancour.
161. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this effectively to challenge and extend students' learning. The skilful use of questioning helps to clarify students' understanding of psychological terms and concepts. Teachers' enthusiasm for the subject motivates students who eagerly engage in the many small-group learning activities that are a consistent feature of lessons. These activities are particularly effective in engaging the interest of male students and are contributing to the good progress they make in Year 13.
162. Leadership is good and provides a clear direction for work in the subject. This is seen in the good progress made since the subject was introduced three years ago. The subject is increasingly popular and both student numbers and standards are rising. Contributory factors to the good progress seen in the subject are very good support and guidance, together with very good assessment procedures that are used effectively to provide students with clear information on the standard of their work and what they need to do in order to improve. Subject management is good. Students' progress against predictions is carefully monitored and additional support is provided when necessary. Very good relationships underpin a strong commitment to success and continued improvement in the subject.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards and examination results are well above average.
- Teaching is challenging and interesting, resulting in very good learning with high levels of student engagement.
- The subject is well managed so that teachers and students know exactly what they have to do.
- Clear, up-to-date textbooks and supplementary resources support learning well.
- Statutory requirements for the teaching of a course of religious education to all sixth form students are not met.

Commentary

163. Achievement in religious education is very good. A Level results in 2003 were well above average. This is reflected in current standards which are also well above average. AS level students in Year 12 investigated absolutist theories very well and showed good knowledge of Kant. Year 13 A Level students had a very good understanding of the ethical criteria for a just war and effectively applied them to a range of modern examples.
164. Students are enthusiastic, well informed, and have very productive relationships with their teachers and each other. Students have achieved much work of a high standard because teaching has been challenging and very well prepared. Teaching is good overall. Very good resources provided good exemplification of the 'law of double effect' and the 'categorical imperative' and students used them well to deepen their understanding by discussing with each other the meaning of sentences and phrases. Teachers know the strengths of each student and provide excellent feedback to help students to progress. Students use the Internet effectively to obtain case study information.
165. The department is very well led and managed and good progress has been made since the last inspection from no provision to good uptake to the AS and A Level courses. Substantial additional continuing professional development had been provided to enhance subject knowledge. The planning of teaching and learning is very good with very precise learning objectives and a key question for each lesson communicated to the students. The course is well resourced with up-to-date texts and a range of other highly focused additional resources. One shortcoming is that there is no provision for sixth form students not taking the A Level course to meet the requirements of the Agreed Syllabus for religious education.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' enthusiasm and very good subject knowledge engage and enthuse students who, as a result, are very keen to learn and do well.
- Very good assessment procedures are having a major impact on students' achievement.
- The analysis and use of performance information are very effective in identifying strengths and weaknesses and guiding planning.
- Students' written work is presented very methodically and accurately.

Commentary

166. Students achieve very well and standards are well above average. In each of the last four years the school has received examination board recognition for a student achieving one of the highest examination marks nationally in the subject. In the 2003 A Level examination, over two-thirds of students obtained A or B grades, with all students obtaining grades in the A to E range. These results were above those obtained in 2002, which were above average. Female students obtain a greater proportion of A or B grades than males. However, these results reflect differences in standards on entry and both groups are achieving very well. AS Level results are above average.
167. Inspection evidence shows standards to be well above expectations for this stage of the course. The coursework of Year 13 students shows a sound understanding of the theoretical foundations of the subject. Their work shows, for example, an understanding of the principles of qualitative and quantitative research and the advantages and disadvantages of different research methodologies. They are able to compare and contrast the views of different social theorists. Students' essays demonstrate their increasing ability to marshal and evaluate different sources of evidence. Year 12 students are making very good progress and are establishing a firm knowledge base for the study of the subject. Students demonstrate an increasing understanding of the ethical issues related to social research and are building an appropriate technical vocabulary. They are keen to express their views and show respect for the opinions of others.
168. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. In lessons, the teachers' very good subject knowledge is used effectively to challenge and extend students' learning. The skilful use of questioning helps to clarify students' understanding of sociological terms and concepts, and the pace at which most lessons are conducted helps to ensure that students maintain concentration throughout.
169. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department provides a clear direction for work in the subject. Students' progress against predictions is carefully monitored and additional support is provided when necessary. This underpins students' very good progress and achievement and as a result the subject makes a significant contribution to the school's examination profile. Very good relationships underpin a strong commitment to further success and continued improvement in the subject.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good; teachers are very knowledgeable and enthusiastic about their subject and inspire students to work hard and achieve very well.
- Students' behaviour and their attitude to learning are very good; they are enthusiastic and keen to work hard.
- The courses offered capitalise on the interest and enthusiasm of students, enabling them to achieve standards which are well above the national average.
- Accommodation for resistant materials needs refurbishing to enable more effective use of space to support more imaginative teaching and learning.

Commentary

170. Standards currently are above average and improve to well above average by the end of AS or A Level courses. Teaching challenges and inspires students who respond very positively, producing work of high quality. They are well motivated, keen and interested in their work, which improves in standard and sophistication over both courses. Practical work seen is of a high standard of manufacture and precise finish. Folders reflect sophisticated use of the design process. AS and A Level results are well above the national average and have been improving over the last four years. Female students predominately choose the textile option and achieve higher results than males, particularly at the highest grades on both courses. Achievement is very good and the students progress at a good rate. This is because teachers' expectations are high, the work set is demanding and the teachers' subject expertise and enthusiasm drives learning forward at a challenging pace. Students' behaviour and attitudes are very good; they work hard to progress and achieve well. They have access to good support and guidance from teachers enabling them to achieve very high standards.
171. Teaching is very good. Teachers are very knowledgeable; they plan and resource a curriculum which builds on the everyday experience of students. This takes their knowledge beyond what is familiar, raising their awareness through visits, video and other media of historical, environmental and sociological influences on design and manufacture. Students' learning is very good, and is well supported by teachers whose informal assessment ensures that individual needs are met and next steps for learning well planned. Students respond well to the pace and challenge set, producing much work out of lesson time. They use ICT and other resources with confidence, selecting appropriate software and style of presentation effectively to support their learning. Their numeracy and literacy skills are well developed and enable them to study effectively and present their work well.
172. Leadership and management are good. The curriculum and resources are well organised to meet the needs of students and effectively support their achievement. Teamwork is a strength; teachers collaborate and support each other very well. Staff are organised to teach aspects of courses for which they are best qualified; this supports student achievement very effectively and has had a significant impact on standards. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Standards and examination results are now well above average and have improved steadily over the last four years. The curriculum has broadened and now attracts high numbers of female students who achieve very well. Some refurbishment has taken place and the textiles room is now bright, well planned and well resourced with very good displays. However, accommodation in resistant materials needs improvement because current provision is insufficiently flexible and restricts the ability of teachers to create a stimulating, multi-

functional environment that inspires and motivates students' learning and matches that provided for the textile option.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

173. Art and design, music and theatre studies were inspected in depth. Music technology was also observed and evaluations are included in the music report.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and sometimes excellent, as a result of which the students' attainment in the A Level examination is rising.
- The head of department offers very good, clear and strong leadership.
- Accommodation for Year 12 is poor. There is no running water, very little display space and the room is cramped and very difficult to teach and learn in.
- The commitment, positive attitude and exemplary behaviour of students leads to a very positive and productive environment for learning.
- Insufficient use is made of ICT resources to enable students to explore digital imaging and manipulation.

Commentary

174. This is a very good department in which teaching and learning are of a very high standard. Students are encouraged to develop as independent learners and their very high level of commitment enables them to flourish creatively, intellectually and socially. Year 13 students in particular are able to take advantage of the opportunities to create vibrant and interesting work that leads to A Level examination grades that are well above national averages. Year 12 students are restricted in their work by the poor accommodation, although both teachers and students work very hard to produce work to a high standard. Teachers have very high expectations of standards of work and students respond positively, showing a high level of personal commitment to their studies.
175. The head of department is committed to improve the rising standards in his department. Under his very effective leadership and management, the department has made good improvement since the previous inspection. He has lost an art room to another department in recent years, and Year 13 students now have to work in poor conditions, which are frustrating and depressing for staff and students alike. Despite this, the students maintain a very positive attitude, work hard and produce work to a high standard. The main art room is spacious and imaginatively used by the students. Relationships throughout the department are excellent and the atmosphere in and out of lesson time is vibrant, creative and enjoyable. Higher-attaining students in Year 13 show a very high level of intellectual and creative engagement with their work, which brings a strong spiritual element to it.
176. Although the standard of research is high and students make good use of the Internet, as well as the very good range of secondary resources available, they have few appropriately powerful ICT resources to develop their studies into digital art. Those who have explored digital imaging tend to do so using their own computers.

Music and music technology

Provision in music and music technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership has secured good improvement in provision since the previous inspection.
- Uptake is high because both music and music technology A Levels are offered.

- Students' have very good attitudes and achieve well because they share very good relationships with teachers.
- The use of three teachers in many courses means that connections between the modules of the courses are under-developed, limiting learning.

Commentary

177. Since the previous inspection improvement has been good. Numbers opting for music at A Level have risen markedly. Also music technology A Level has been introduced and it is now available in both Years 12 and 13. Management of this expanded provision is very good, using the expertise of all five music teachers and the close relationship with the county music service, as well as engaging the support of other local musicians. With student numbers almost tripling in recent years, accommodation and resourcing for the subject has been very well handled, although there are still shortcomings, such as an insufficient number of practice rooms on the Castle site and the limited digital sound sources for class teaching of music technology. Students particularly praise the good teaching, the opportunities for participation in a range of high quality musical activities (including those organised in the main school, as well as specific sixth form activities) and the open access to the music technology facilities. Retention rates on all courses are very good, and the subject has even attracted new students in mid-course from other schools.
178. Although standards in all music courses, like the results in examinations in 2003, are average, students' achievement is good overall. Many students, particularly on the music technology courses, have modest GCSE music results and a few have not taken the examination at all. Both male and female students achieve equally well. Students of different ethnic backgrounds also achieve well. The students' very good attitudes to the subject and high level of motivation are enriched through the mutual respect between teachers and students. Teachers' good subject skills and knowledge, and well focused oral feedback during practical work supports independent learning well in music technology and in performance studies. In more academic study, especially on the music courses, teaching, while thorough and supportive, is not sharply tailored to individual needs. In analytical work, higher-attaining students may have to listen repeatedly to material they have already mastered without being given extension tasks. In teaching compositional techniques, exercises are not adapted sufficiently to rectify weaknesses before they are consolidated. In music technology, some students are held back through a weak grasp of musical conventions, although their digital and analogue practical work is good. Marking is good, but there is insufficient monitoring of students' note-taking skills. Although students have targets and are aware of predicted grades, formal tracking of students' progress is underdeveloped. While teaching is good overall, the deployment of one teacher to each individual module of each course inhibits students making clear links between elements within courses and explains why standards are not higher. Also time is lost when teachers, and occasionally students, transfer between sites.

Theatre Studies

Provision in theatre studies is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well but examination results are below average, in part because many students lack extensive previous drama experience.
- Very good teaching encourages the students' commitment to the subject and although numbers are rising, they remain small in comparison to other subjects.
- Good leadership and management are focusing on the drive to raise standards.
- The technical facilities for teaching are limited.

Commentary

179. Attainment fluctuates, but students respond well to the subject and make good progress. The lack of drama in earlier years affects standards. Standards are average at the end of Year 13. As the numbers taking AS and A Level examinations are relatively small, it is not possible to identify trends or make valid comparisons with national averages. In 2003, all students obtained a grade, but few were high. Students do not perform as well in drama as they do in their other subjects. Few male students choose drama, although the number is increasing. Not all students have studied drama at GCSE or substantially in Years 7 to 9 so their performance skills are limited. Although the sixth form drama studio provides a good space, it is not currently well equipped technically. This limits the choice of technical options.
180. At the end of Year 13, students have a very good knowledge and understanding of the plays studied. Their very good reading and writing skills enable many to produce written work (diaries, reviews and critical essays) of a high standard. A few students in Year 12 do not always spend sufficient time on written tasks, but others produce excellent portfolios. Students are accustomed to collaborating and soon achieve very good teamwork. They have least experience of performance and production skills, but they work hard to acquire voice and movement techniques.
181. The quality of teaching and learning was very good in the lessons seen. Teachers planned carefully and appropriately, sometimes teaching traditionally and at other times, following the instructions of the student director, occasionally intervening to guide the class. Students benefit from the independence and responsibility they are given. Methods are effective. Students learnt much more thoroughly from a traditional quiz presented on a computer slide-show than from a written question sheet. Teachers demonstrate acting and movement skills well, so students understand what they must aim for. There is constant feedback on practical activities supplemented by individual tutorials that also prepare students for their coursework and practical examinations. Regular theatre visits to London, Stratford and Warwick further enhance the curriculum.
182. The leadership of the department is good. The head of the department is concerned to raise standards and regularly reviews practice and procedures for improvement. Management is effective, coping well with the various dates of practical examinations as well as arrangements on two sites. The drama studio offers a flexible space, well suited to examination classes with an adjacent Green Room for lessons or changing facilities, but is in need of refurbishment. Technical equipment needs replacing and upgrading and the school is aware of this. This situation restricts the specialist study of performance, direction and design. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education was inspected in detail and a lesson observed of the AVCE course in **leisure and recreation**. The teaching and learning in this lesson were good. Students achieve well and standards are rising to levels above the national average. The number of students opting for the course is also rising.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and meets students' individual needs very well.
- The subject leader and sixth form co-ordinator have a very strong commitment to improvement and success.
- The excellent extra-curricular programme provides opportunities for all students to extend their learning.
- Accommodation on the sixth form site is inadequate to meet the growing demands of the curriculum.
- Numbers of girls following A Level courses are low.

Commentary

183. Standards in lessons and the work of Year 12 and Year 13 students are above average and show good improvement from their attainment on entry to the sixth form; most students are achieving well. The A Level results in 2003 were in line with the national average. The standards of male and female students are broadly similar. It is not possible to make a valid comparison of students' 2002 results, due to the small number involved. High attaining students achieve very well in a range of sports at county, regional and sometimes, national levels.
184. The quality of teaching and learning is very good in Years 12 and 13. Students achieve well across both years because of very good specialist teaching. Teachers show wide subject knowledge and are aware of how students learn; they work hard to use methods and resources that meet their needs. In an A Level outdoor tennis lesson, sophisticated video analysis facilities and the support of the department's ICT technician, greatly enhanced students' work in skills analysis and performance improvement. A few students find the change to sixth form study difficult and initially do not take sufficient responsibility for independent learning. Teachers give good support and guidance by easing students into research and further reading. Most students are able to write at length on a variety of topics, such as the historical and cultural basis of sport. The extended writing skills of a small minority are less well developed. Listening skills are good and students confidently use technical language. The department's enhanced ICT provision, through its Sports College status, enables students to video-analyse performance, research information through the Internet and summarise data in graphical form. However, a few students do not make sufficient use of ICT to enhance their learning. Students are encouraged to develop their numerical skills, through a variety of tasks, such as interpreting flow chart data in work on the cardio-vascular system. Most handle numerical data well. Teachers' expectations of students are high, and they respond very positively; retention rates for courses are good. Students' written assignments are marked regularly and teachers' good diagnostic comments ensure that students know how to improve.
185. Leadership and management are very good. Very good procedures are in place to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of teaching and standards. All students have the opportunity to participate in timetabled physical education, including examination, recreational, vocational and leadership award courses. Participation rates are good. The Community Sports Leaders' Award course provides opportunities for taking responsibility; it also provides well-qualified volunteers to support schools and community sports events. Students' learning in practical aspects is greatly enhanced through opportunities to use the excellent facilities on the main site and participation in the excellent, extra-curricular sports programme. Improvement since the last inspection is good. To improve further, accommodation and resources at the Sixth Form Centre need upgrading to create a more stimulating learning environment.

BUSINESS

Business studies and economics

Provision for business studies and economics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in both business studies and economics examinations at A Level are outstanding following a significant improvement in 2003.
- Teaching is of a consistently high standard.
- Students have a very positive attitude to their work and play a full part in lessons.
- Work in students' portfolios is of a very high standard and is exceptionally well presented.
- The department has good links with the local business community.
- The department has been proactive in improving the gender balance in economics classes.

Commentary

186. A Level results in both business studies and economics examinations at A Level were well above average in 2003. In business studies, three-quarters of students achieved the higher A and B grades with almost half attaining an A grade. In economics, which is taken by a smaller number of students, almost all attained the higher grades and half attained an A grade. This represents a significant improvement in both subjects over the good results of the previous year.
187. The very good standard of teaching combined with a high degree of commitment from students ensures that achievement is very high. An analysis of data indicates that students achieve better in A Level business studies than in their other subjects and it is followed closely in this respect by A Level economics. Because teaching provides students with a high level of challenge in a very supportive working environment, their learning is consistently good. Students are well informed about their performance against examination criteria because assessment procedures and practice are very thorough. Detailed written diagnostic comments from teachers, well supported by frequent oral feedback, ensures that students know what to do to improve further and achieve their full potential.
188. The quality of students' portfolios is exemplary, reflecting a high level of commitment to the maintenance of very good standards. Word-processed work is the expected norm and spreadsheets are used to analyse data effectively, demonstrating at least a satisfactory and very often good competence in the use of ICT.
189. Very effective leadership and management of the department provide the environment in which students are very well prepared for their examinations. Teachers work well as a team and ensure that there is a favourable level of resources of all kinds to support learning. This includes links with business as well as participation in national business competitions. The work of the department is very well documented, enabling the analysis of both staff and students' performance in order to inform planning and to help students improve further. The department has been proactive in improving the gender balance in economics by attracting a significant number of female students to the economics course in the current Year 12. Many students continue their study of these subjects in higher education.
190. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. The curriculum offered by the department has developed considerably and standards have improved very significantly.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

191. All students are taught PSHE and several choose to take general studies as an extra AS or A Level. Results in general studies were substantially above average at AS and A Level in 2003.
192. Two lessons of **general studies** were observed, one in each year group. Both were well taught and benefited from the positive attitudes of the students. A useful examination-directed activity in Year 12 was approached with commitment by the students. The teacher's calm confidence with the material and willingness to enter into discussion consolidated learning and ideas to good effect. Effective and probing questioning in the Year 13 lesson, challenged the students to think deeply about the issues and resulted in some perceptive responses from the students as they debated the decline of religious observance.
193. Two Year 12 **PSHE** lessons were also observed. In one very well taught session discussing entry to university, the tasks were well suited to the students who were lively and articulate and related well to the teacher. Another lesson on a similar theme was well prepared. It engaged the students and enabled them to learn a great deal about university applications and to consider matters that they will need to deal with when selecting a university.

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

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

