

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **KESWICK SCHOOL**

Keswick

LEA area: Cumbria

Unique reference number: 112441

Headteacher: Mr Michael Chapman

Lead inspector: Graeme Clarke

Dates of inspection: 22<sup>nd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> March 2004

Inspection number: 264055

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

© Crown copyright 2004

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive

School category: Voluntary aided

Age range of pupils: 11 to 18 years

Gender of pupils: Mixed

Number on roll; 1005

School address: Vicarage Hill

Keswick

Cumbria

Postcode: CA12 5QB

Telephone number: 01768 772605

Fax number: 01768 774813

Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs Sue Leigh

Date of previous inspection: 26<sup>th</sup> January 1998

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Keswick School is a Specialist Science College and a Leading Edge School. With 1005 pupils on roll, of whom 188 are in the Sixth Form, it caters for boys and girls aged 11 – 18. Forty-one pupils are boarders. It is a popular and oversubscribed school, and has grown in size since the last inspection. It has a high reputation for its academic successes and is highly respected in the community. Pupils come from a range of social and economic backgrounds, which are mostly favourable, and their attainment on entry is above average. Very few pupils leave or enter the school other than at the times of normal transfer. Hardly any pupils come from minority ethnic heritages, and none is in the early stage of learning English as an additional language. The number of pupils with special educational needs, including those with statements of special need, is well below average.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1547	Clarke GL	<i>Lead inspector</i>	
11041	Moore M	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
32661	Hopkins P	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
19043	Lewis D	<i>Sixth Form co-ordinator</i>	Chemistry (Post 16); Physics (Post 16).
20629	Bryson J	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Drama.
15396	Bulman R	<i>Team inspector</i>	Modern foreign languages.
27416	Howard T	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.
30294	Gower D	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science.
21981	McDermott A	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and communication technology.
20825	Ogden B	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography; Citizenship.
10316	Bertram N	<i>Team inspector</i>	History; Special educational needs.
3704	Haye K	<i>Team inspector</i>	Religious education.
24894	Petts C	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology.
23499	Seymour H	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music; Art and design.
22906	Hodgson B	<i>Team inspector</i>	Physical education.

The inspection contractor was:

VT Education Services  
 Old Garden House  
 The Lanterns  
 Bridge Lane  
 London  
 SW11 3AD

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	<b>Page</b>
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>5</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>10</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES</b>	<b>22</b>
Boarding	
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4</b>	
<b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM</b>	
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENT</b>	<b>50</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This is a very successful school** which provides a very good quality of education. The recent award of Science College status, the good teaching, very good governance, and very good leadership by the headmaster all make an important contribution to pupils' good achievement. Pupils have excellent attitudes to school. The school is spending within its income and gives very good value for money.

**The school's main strengths and weaknesses: are:**

- Pupils attain high standards in tests and examinations as a result of excellent provision made in information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education, and very good provision in German, mathematics, art and design, physical education, and citizenship.
- An excellent community spirit and ethos for learning is strongly supported by pupils' very positive attitudes and relationships, and by very good provision for personal social and health education (PSHE).
- Information collected from assessing pupils' work is not used with sufficient thoroughness and rigour in every subject department to plan teaching and promote higher achievement.
- Senior and middle managers' monitoring and evaluation of work in subject departments is inconsistent.
- Leading Edge and Science College status, together with the high quality development of ICT, makes a substantial contribution to the work in partner schools.

Since the previous inspection the school has built upon its high standards of attainment. The sustained good improvement in pupils' results in the Year 9 tests, and in Year 11 GCSE examinations, is a major accomplishment. Good progress has been made on most of the main issues identified at that time. Further work is needed in monitoring the quality of teaching and spreading successful practice, in developing greater consistency in effective target setting in Years 7 to 9, and in marking.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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 have attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

**Pupils' achievement is good.** Attainment is above the national average when pupils join the school and is well above average in statutory tests in Year 9. In 2003, it was well above the average of similar schools. The sustained improvement reflects good progress and achievement. Currently, pupils' work in Years 7 to 9 shows that achievement is good in English, mathematics and science, and very good in art and design, ICT and religious education. The extent of pupils' improvement from Year 6 to Year 9 is in the top 5 per cent of schools nationally. The 2003 GCSE results for Year 11 were well above the national average in most subjects, except in the sciences, and overall were in line with the average for similar schools. The extent of pupils' improvement from Year 9 to Year 11 is above average. Overall, pupils' standards are well above average in literacy and ICT, and above average in numeracy. Achievement in lessons is mostly good in Years 10 and 11, notably very good in mathematics, ICT and art, and excellent in religious education. Gifted and talented pupils, boarding pupils, and those with special educational needs (SEN) achieve well. Boys and girls achieve equally well.

Pupils' **spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good** throughout the school. Pupils show excellent attitudes to school. Their behaviour is very good, and their commitment to school life and the school community is excellent. Attendance is well above average and punctuality very good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education is very good. Teaching is good overall.** Teaching in a third of lessons is very good or excellent. In many lessons very effective methods and encouragement from teachers sustain pupils' involvement and lead to very good learning. Teaching is good in most subjects, excellent in religious education, very good in ICT and art, and satisfactory in geography.

All pupils enjoy excellent access to a very good range of activities, particularly in the arts and sports. Pupils benefit from good support, advice and guidance, although too often they do not know clearly enough how they can improve in subject learning. Partnerships with parents and the community are very good. The school's Science College status and its Leading Edge role promote excellent partnerships in the locality and foster educational development very effectively.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management throughout the school are good.** The school is very well governed. The headmaster gives very good leadership and shares with the governors very high commitment and outstanding dedication to ensuring and sustaining the school's high standards in all aspects of its work. Most heads of subjects lead and manage their departments very well and some, for example in ICT, physical education and religious education, to excellent effect. The use of information about pupils' attainments to plan teaching and learning for groups of pupils is inconsistent. As a result, it limits achievement in some subjects but is effective in others. Evaluating the success of teaching varies between departments and does not draw on the wealth of expertise in the school with enough rigour to ensure consistently high levels of effectiveness. The school meets statutory requirements except for a daily act of collective worship, and for religious education in Year 12 in line with the locally Agreed Syllabus. Governors place a very high value upon morning assembly but limitations on space restrict this activity to parts of the total number of pupils each day. Nevertheless, many other activities, including the high quality of work in religious education, make a major and effective contribution to pupils' spiritual development.

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

Parents have a high degree of confidence in the school and are very pleased with the range of provision, the standards achieved and the care their children receive. The school respects and acts on pupils' views and the concerns they express through the pastoral system and the developing school council. Pupils are generally very satisfied and value the support, help and advice their teachers give.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

**The most important things the school should do to improve further are for the governors and the headmaster to:**

- Promote higher achievement amongst all different groups of pupils through the consistent and rigorous use of information about their performance, for the planning of appropriate teaching and learning activities.
- Develop a more thorough, systematic and consistent approach by senior and middle managers to evaluating the work of subject departments, and in turn use the findings to plan and foster improvement in teaching and learning.

In addition, explore and act upon ways to meet statutory requirements for a daily act of collective worship throughout the school and for religious education in Year 12.

## THE SIXTH FORM AT KESWICK SCHOOL

About 150 Sixth Form students study mainly for GCE courses. There are excellent links with the local community. Most students go on to higher education.

### OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **very effective Sixth Form**. Overall, achievement is **very good**. Very good teaching, with more than half of lessons very good or excellent, leads to very good learning. The school gives excellent support and guidance to its students. It monitors closely the attendance and work of its students, and meetings with tutors are both frequent and productive. The Sixth Form does not draw on funds allocated to the main school, nor does it contribute to the funding of the main school. Given the very good achievement of students, the Sixth Form is very cost effective.

#### The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Provision is excellent in religious studies and art; and very good in business education, physical education and media studies.
- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Sixth Form students take their responsibilities very seriously, and make an outstanding contribution to the life of the school.
- Although a good range of GCE courses is available in the Sixth Form, the curriculum does not make enough provision for Vocational Courses.
- Resources for the Sixth Form are good overall, but students do not have sufficient free access to computers for private study.

### 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	<b>Good in English.</b> Stimulating, challenging teaching ensures that all students make satisfactory progress.
Mathematics	<b>Good.</b> Teachers' very good subject knowledge develops good understanding, leading to good achievement. Students develop well as independent learners.
Science	<b>Good in chemistry.</b> Lively and stimulating teaching helps students to achieve well, though the highest attaining students do not always do as well as they could. Practical skills are good.
Physics	<b>Good in physics.</b> A well-planned course and good teaching lead to good achievement. Results are close to the national average. Students do not always evaluate their work critically enough.
Humanities	<b>Good in history.</b> Teaching is very good in challenging students to think deeply and to reach good standards of historical analysis. Students are positive and respond well to the need to work independently.
Religious education	<b>Excellent in religious education.</b> Work is very well planned and students work extremely hard. Monitoring of work is very efficient, and students gain examination results that are better than predicted.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	<b>Very good in design and technology.</b> Teaching is very good and students are interested, engaged and challenged to work independently. Unsatisfactory ICT provision hinders further improvements in achievement and the currently secure standards.
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	<b>Very good in physical education.</b> Teaching is very good; students are challenged to think about issues, and teachers plan lessons very well. Students have very positive attitudes, and high work rates contribute to high



	standards and very good achievement.
<b>Curriculum area</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Business	<b>Very good.</b> Very well structured teaching, supported by individual guidance in the AVCE course, results in very good learning. Students on both GCE and AVCE courses achieve well.

*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

Students have access to excellent advice, guidance and support. Very good advice is given to students in planning their studies, and they are very well prepared for the privileges and responsibilities of life in the Sixth Form. They quickly form productive relationships with their form tutors and the head of Sixth Form. There are good procedures for giving them extra help in their studies. Very good support is available on entry to higher education, and there is ready access to careers information. Students are given considerable freedom in organising their studies, and teachers foster in them an exceptionally responsible attitude in their contributions to the life of the school. This helps to prepare them for higher education.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership by the head of Sixth Form is very good. He has a clear vision for the place of the Sixth Form in the school. He communicates it well to his colleagues, creating an excellent sense of purpose, with high aspirations, in students and teachers alike. Within subjects, leadership is good overall, and is excellent in physical education and religious education. Support for students is very good, both within subjects and by form tutors. Students' academic progress is monitored very well, so that support can be provided promptly when needed. The school does not meet the requirements for religious education in Year 12, and does not meet the statutory requirement for a daily act of collective worship.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students are very positive in their views of the Sixth Form. They speak very highly of their teachers, who give them very good support, both academically and in their personal development. They report that the head of Sixth Form and their form tutors work with them to identify and resolve any problems they may have, and give them excellent guidance about their university applications. In particular, they greatly value the relationships they have with their teachers, based on mutual trust and respect, and the excellent opportunities to take on responsibility within the school. They are extremely supportive of their school and are very proud of the place the school occupies in the community. Although their relationships with staff of the school are excellent, they feel that the school does not always give them sufficient opportunity to influence its development, or regard them as the responsible citizens they are.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

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

All pupils achieve well in their current work. In 2003, statutory test results for Year 9 in the core subjects were well above average. GCSE examination standards were well above national averages except in science subjects.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- High standards in examinations have been sustained over recent years, and reflect the strong leadership of the school.
- Year 9 science results were in the top 5 per cent of similar schools.
- The extent of improvement by Year 9 in 2003 was well above the national average, and above it in Year 11 at GCSE. This represents good achievement by both boys and girls.
- GCSE standards were below average in biology, chemistry and physics, but the recently appointed head of science is leading developments to redress this situation.

#### Commentary

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	36.0 (36.7)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	39.4 (40.0)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	38.3 (39.5)	33.6 (33.3)

*There were 159 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

1. Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above the national average in English, mathematics and science. The school set high targets for 2003 and exceeded them. English results were above, and mathematics well above, the average of similar schools. Notably, science results were in the top 5 per cent of similar schools. Although results in all subjects slipped a little compared to those in 2002, the school has sustained improvement above the national trend over the past few years. Boys and girls attained equally well in the tests. Pupils' attainments were above average when they entered the school in Year 7 in 2000. The extent of their improvement by 2003 was well above both the national average and the average of similar schools. This represents good achievement by both boys and girls.

##### **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	72 (76)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	95 (97)	91 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (98)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	41.9 (43.9)	34.7 (34.8)

*There were 148 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

2. Attainment in GCSE in 2003 overall was well above the national average. Results at A\* to C grade were significantly above national average in most subjects, especially in art and design, design and technology, German, physical education and religious education. Standards were below average in biology, chemistry and physics, for which all pupils enter. A recently appointed head of science is leading developments to redress this situation effectively. Overall, however, these results are markedly above the national average for combined science, which is taken by the great majority of pupils in the country. Pupils' average total points score, based upon their best eight subjects, was

at the average of schools where pupils attained similar Year 9 levels in 2001. Pupils generally achieved well in GCSE. This is reflected by the extent of their improvement since their Year 6 tests, which was well above the national average. Overall, the improvement in the school's results is in line with the year-on-year national trend. As a result of very strong leadership from the headmaster, consistently high examination attainment has been sustained over the past few years. Attainment exceeded the targets set for 2003, and the school is confident of reaching the very high targets set for 2004.

3. Pupils achieve well, both in lessons and in their current work. In Years 7 to 9 they work exceptionally well to achieve very high standards in religious education and very well to achieve above average standards in English, art and design and ICT. Achievement and standards are satisfactory in geography, and good elsewhere.

4. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' achievement in geography improves to good, leading to above average standards; otherwise the picture is almost the same as in Years 7 to 9. Although standards in instrumental and choral music are very high as a result of very good and in some cases outstanding achievement by those pupils taking part, achievement for others in mainstream music lessons is satisfactory.

5. The school has a relatively low proportion of pupils on the register of special educational needs. They achieve well in relation to the targets set for them in their individual education plans in all subjects. In turn, a substantial number do well enough to reach the point where they can safely be taken off the register of special educational needs and can cope well throughout the curriculum.

6. Procedures for formal recognition and sharing of information about gifted and talented pupils are not consistent within the school. Talented pupils are identified in some departments. In physical education they are supported and achieve very well. Some represent their county, for example in soccer and rugby football. Pupils' achievements in choral work are widely acclaimed through competition in local music festivals. The highest attaining pupils reached well above average levels at grades A\* and A in many GCSE examinations in 2003, notably in physical education, art and design, design and technology, and religious education. Like their classmates, the highest attaining pupils achieve well in lessons and in the work they produce.

## **Sixth Form**

Students achieve very well and attain standards which are above average.

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

- Examination results were above average in 2003, and well above in 2002.
- Results were in the top 5 per cent in 2003 in art and design, and were well above average in biology, design and technology, physics and physical education, and in AVCE business.
- Work seen in lessons generally reflects these very high standards, and was outstanding in art and design and religious education.

## **Commentary**

7. Most students stay on from Year 11 into the Sixth Form, where they are joined by students, including boarders, from a variety of backgrounds. As a result, the profile of students' attainment is similar to that of students joining Sixth Forms nationally. The school's overall A Level examination results were above the national average in 2003, and well above in 2002. Girls did better than boys, which reflects the national picture. However, boys did better in comparison with boys nationally than girls did in comparison with girls nationally. All students gained a pass grade in every subject in 2002. Although this excellent record was not maintained, the number of pass grades in 2003 was still over 97 per cent. The percentage of awards at the higher grades, A and B, was above average in 2003, and well above in 2002. Students in art and design did particularly well in both years, with results in the top 5 per cent nationally. Other results in the top 5 per cent were in design and

technology, and in geography, both in 2002. Overall results in 2003 were lower than in 2002, reflecting the lower attainment of these students in GCSE, but they still attained well above average results in biology, design and technology, physics and physical education. Only in general studies were they below average in 2003, though in 2002 they had been well above average. Over the period since the last inspection, the tradition of high standards in examinations in Year 13 has been maintained.

8. Published results in the AS examination should be interpreted with care, because they refer only to students who did not subsequently go on to gain a pass at A Level. In general, the highest attaining students in AS continue their studies in Year 13, and do not therefore appear in the published statistics. However, particular successes were noted in 2003 in drama, English literature, geography, mathematics and physical education.

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

	<b>School results</b>	<b>National results</b>
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	92.4 (99.2)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	37.7 (56.0)	35.5 (35.3)
Average point score per pupil	304.2 (345.7)	258.2 (263.3)

*There were 78 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

9. Standards of work seen in lessons were at least as good as expected. They are often above or well above average and are better than is indicated by the 2003 examination results. This reflects higher standards on entry to the Sixth Form in 2002 and 2003. Standards of work seen were particularly high in religious education, and art and design. They were also very good in business studies, physical education, and English.

10. In religious education, for example, students learn to think critically, to evaluate the writings of well-known thinkers, and to express themselves clearly and unambiguously. Students develop similar skills in most subjects, so that what they have learned in one curriculum area helps them in their studies generally. Activities in which they work together help students with relatively low GCSE grades to become used to thinking for themselves. The respect which Sixth Form students have for the views of others means that they are not afraid to offer opinions. As a result, students' work in class is generally better than expected from their GCSE grades, and often much better. Achievement overall is therefore very good.

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

Pupils have excellent attitudes to school, and their behaviour is very good. Attendance is well above average. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good.

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

- Pupils' interest in school life is outstanding.
- Pupils are very willing to be enterprising and to take responsibility.
- Pupils' relationships with each other are excellent.
- Attendance is very good, though the school does not actively pursue absence promptly.

### **Commentary**

11. Pupils show excellent attitudes to their learning. They enjoy coming to school and display very good behaviour both in and out of lessons. The inspection team was very impressed with the demeanour and behaviour of pupils, who were pleased to help them. Of particular note is the way pupils demonstrate pride in their achievements and their school.

12. Pupils have respect and care for their own belongings, the belongings of others and school property. Each pupil is pleased to be allocated a personal locker. The school has no graffiti or vandalism and is clean and tidy. Pupils' punctuality is very good. They arrive at school well on time, and registration and lessons commence promptly.

#### **Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002-3 (%)**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	93.4	School data	0
National data	91.7	National data	1.1

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

13. Attendance, at 93.4 per cent, is well above the national average and is very good. Pupils are absent only for good reason and the school has no unauthorised absences, which is well below the national median. The school does not yet have an electronic system of registration, nor does it contact home routinely on the first day of absence, because most parents give reasons at an early stage. However, occasionally several days go by without the school being aware of the reasons for a pupil's absence, which is an unsatisfactory situation.

14. Pupils display excellent interest in school life and are very willing to be enterprising and take responsibility. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 elect representatives to the developing School Council. They raise money for many charitable causes, for example to sponsor a Kenyan boy for his entire education. Pupils very enthusiastically support the many school activities, including sports, drama, music and numerous clubs, and their level of participation is excellent. Pupils occasionally arrange and present year assemblies.

15. Incidents of bullying are very rare, but when they occur they are dealt with immediately and effectively by staff. Pupils interviewed confirmed that they felt the school promotes good relationships and racial harmony and sets very high expectations for pupils' conduct.

16. The few school rules and behaviour code are well understood by pupils and applied consistently by staff. As a result of the calm and supportive atmosphere generated at school, pupils develop their confidence and self-esteem very well, and make very good progress. During the past year there have been no permanent exclusions and 24 fixed term exclusions, which is low in comparison with other schools of similar size. This sanction is always used for good reason and meticulously recorded.

#### **Exclusions**

##### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White British

##### ***Exclusions in the last school year 2002-2003***

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
969	24	0

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

17. Spiritual development is very good. Pupils explore values and beliefs, think about their own priorities and ideals, and reflect on what they learn. They have a deep appreciation of nature, promoted by extensive use of the surrounding area. Moral development is excellent. Relationships between pupils are in no way affected by their ethnic origins or other differences and they are sensitive to different cultural values. Pupils are very good at helping and supporting each other and can be relied upon to carry out responsibly any tasks they have been given. Pupils' social development is excellent, and reflects the very strong sense of community in the school. Pupils share common values that promote equality between those from different backgrounds and of different ages. They co-operate well in groups, and younger and older pupils work together very

well. In lessons and in movement around school, there is nearly always a very civilised atmosphere. Cultural development is very good. Pupils develop a strong appreciation of their own culture, including particularly their local cultural heritage of the Lake District. Their cultural values from beyond Britain are less widely developed.

## **Sixth Form**

Students' attitudes to work are excellent and their behaviour is mature and responsible. Attendance and punctuality are both very good. Students work hard and collaborate well during lessons, showing respect for the values, attitudes and beliefs of one another.

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

- Students' attitudes to their work are excellent.
- Through the prefect system, students make an outstanding contribution to the school community.
- Moral and social development are excellent, and students listen and respond sensitively to the views of others.
- The high level of trust the school places in its Sixth Form students is not misplaced. Students, in turn, are very proud of the school's place in the community and are keen to promote it at every opportunity.

## **Commentary**

18. Students respond willingly to the many opportunities that the school has to offer. During lessons, they show commitment and pride in their work and readily participate in a wide range of activities. They respect the freedoms that the school gives them to organise their studies for themselves, whilst making good use of the excellent support their teachers and the pastoral staff of the Sixth Form provide. They are pleased to apply for positions as prefects and, where appropriate, they take considerable responsibility for assisting staff to maintain the good order which is apparent throughout the school. In addition, students act as mentors for newly arrived Year 7 students and organise numerous charitable events within the community. It is a measure of the school's confidence in its students that they are often given considerable freedom in how they organise their work in these areas, with adults providing overall guidance and supervision. The response of the Sixth Form to this confidence is quite outstanding, and the school is rightly proud of its Sixth Form.

19. Spiritual development is very good. Students are encouraged to explore their ideas and values in most lessons and also to listen carefully and respond sensitively to the views of others. Religious beliefs are well explored by the large number who take religious studies, but there is no basic religious education for all students in Year 12 and only a small amount in Year 13. Students are keen to debate contemporary issues and do this with vigour and enthusiasm, whilst courteously showing their respect for those with whom they disagree.

20. Moral education is excellent. There is a very strong consensus on the values promoted by the school, so that all students care for younger students and are keen to help and support each other when they have a problem. This extends to a concern for minorities and under-privileged groups in this country and abroad. When discussing moral and ethical issues, students have a well-developed ability to reason issues through and to recognise a range of different starting points.

21. Social development among Sixth Form students is excellent. Sixth Form students have a strong sense of community and mix freely and easily with younger students, supporting and helping them in after-school activities.

22. Cultural development is good. Students are aware of the strength of the cultural influences they come under and can discuss these sensibly. They play a full part in the artistic and musical life of the school. They recognise and value the range of different cultures they meet in the school.

Students have a reasonable level of awareness of different cultures but this needs to be further developed to prepare them for university and working life.

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

The quality of education provided by the school is good; in the Sixth Form it is very good. Teaching is good overall and very good in the Sixth Form. There is very little unsatisfactory teaching. Provision for students with SEN is good and the school provides very good opportunities and access to all its students. The curriculum in Years 7 to 11 is good overall. Pupils have very good opportunities for enrichment. Staffing, accommodation and resources are good, and the library is a valuable and well-used resource. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities both in relation to specific courses and more generally. The school is a vibrant community and pupils and students are proud to be members of it.

### **Teaching and learning**

The quality of teaching and learning are good. Assessment is satisfactory.

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

- Teaching is good overall, with nearly four in every five lessons good or better.
- Teaching is very good in art and ICT throughout Years 7 to 11, and in mathematics and citizenship in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is also very good in the Sixth Form.
- The good teaching leads to good learning.
- Assessment is good overall, but is not used well enough to inform lesson planning.
- Students do not always have a clear enough grasp of what they need to do to improve.

### **Commentary**

23. Teaching throughout the school is good; it is very good in the Sixth Form. Excellent teaching was seen in all parts of the school, and in Years 7 to 11 a quarter of lessons were very good or better. Two-thirds of lessons in Years 7 to 9 were good or better, and in Years 10 and 11 this figure was just over three-quarters. Only two unsatisfactory lessons were seen, both in Year 9, though they were in different parts of the curriculum. Outstanding teaching was seen in French, German, drama and religious education, and very good teaching in nearly every part of the school. Teaching in the Sixth Form is distinctly better than in the rest of the school. The table below summarises the quality of teaching throughout the school.

#### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 157 lessons**

<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Very poor</b>
11 (7 %)	41 (26 %)	69 (44 %)	34 (22 %)	2 (1 %)	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.*

24. Most teachers have a good command of their subject, and know how to communicate it well to their students. They have good relationships with their students, who engage well with the lesson and work hard. Standards of behaviour in lessons are high, as students work hard to do as well as possible. In only a very few lessons, nearly all in Years 7 to 9, did students fail to learn as well as they should.

25. In the very best lessons, the teacher used a secure grasp of the subject to challenge students as far as possible without allowing them to be overwhelmed. A good range of activities, in which students became completely absorbed, supported a variety of learning styles and led to excellent learning. The constant interaction between the teacher and students meant that the teacher was able to assess progress continually, and to adapt the lesson as students' needs became apparent. In such lessons, for example in French and German, students learned as well as could be expected, leading to excellent achievement.

26. In an excellent lesson in religious studies in Year 11, the teacher used a PowerPoint presentation followed by a question and answer session to identify different viewpoints within the class. Activities that were carefully matched to the abilities of the students in each group, on the basis of accurate assessment, made sure that all students were involved in learning and had a part to play in the work of their group.
27. There is good support for pupils with SEN. Learning support assistants work well with teachers, who brief them fully about their role in the lesson. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) deploys support staff well, and makes good arrangements where withdrawal from groups is seen as best for the individual. Good support was seen, for example, in ICT lessons. The school has arrangements locally for pupils to undertake more specialised programmes of study not covered in the school itself.
28. In lessons which were satisfactory rather than good or very good, the teacher often presented the material well but did not do enough to make sure that all students understood the work. In such lessons, which were often led firmly by the teacher, students played a passive role and learning suffered as a result. These lessons are in a minority, but still more could be done across the school to promote the best teaching practices, with greater variety of activity and a level of demand well matched to the students' needs, which would lead to more active involvement and better learning.
29. Since the last inspection, the overall quality of teaching has been maintained, the many good features of teaching have been consolidated, and the proportion of excellent teaching has increased significantly. Areas for improvement have been addressed, but improvements are still not fully assimilated across the school.
30. Assessment is good overall. The quality and consistency of marking are generally good. Pupils receive positive comments and guidance for improvement but these are not consistently linked to National Curriculum Levels or GCSE grades. As a result, students do not understand well enough how they can improve, for example in science and geography. Subject-specific targets are effectively set in religious education and ICT, where they support high levels of achievement. In other areas of the curriculum they are not used well enough to raise standards. In many lessons that are satisfactory rather than good or better, assessment is insufficiently used to inform subject lesson planning.
31. Since the last inspection, progress has been made at whole school level, with the altering of policy and the use of data to set targets for individual pupils to improve. Although good data is collected and made available to heads of department, inconsistencies remain in its use to raise standards, and to inform lesson planning.

## **Sixth Form**

Teaching and learning in the Sixth Form are very good. Assessment is good.

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

- Well over half of all teaching is very good or excellent.
- Through discussions, and building on students' sensitivity to the views of others, teachers often create an excellent learning environment.
- Not enough use is made of assessment information in planning lessons to suit different learning styles or to anticipate problems before they arise.

## **Commentary**

32. Teaching in the Sixth Form is very good, with nearly 60 per cent of all lessons very good or excellent. Teachers know their students well, and design lessons to capture their interest and inspire them to do their best. Discussions are a feature of lessons in nearly all subjects. These are especially effective in helping students to learn well, because they take place in an environment in which students and teachers are equal participants in an exciting voyage of discovery.



33. Despite these strengths, there are ways in which teaching could be improved still further. Some lessons, for example in the sciences, do not do enough to promote a variety of learning styles, or to use a variety of activities in which students' engagement can promote greater depth of understanding. In many subject areas, written activities make a major contribution to the quality of students' folders. In others, the emphasis is on practising examination activities. These help students to learn how to solve routine problems, but are less effective in promoting the really good level of understanding which helps them to cope with problems they have not seen before.

34. Assessment is good overall. Sixth Form work is nearly always carefully marked, with useful comments on how students can improve still further. More formal assessments are regular and firmly based on national standards. Good records are kept at whole-school level, and are used well by the head of Sixth Form and form tutors as the basis of support for students who are doing less well than they could. Subject teachers use the outcomes of assessment to identify students in need of additional help.

35. However, the wealth of detailed information collected about students is still under-used by subject heads to identify precisely how difficulties have arisen, and how lesson planning could be improved to cater for the needs of all students. This use of shared information is an area for development.

## **The curriculum**

The quality of the curriculum in Years 7 to 11 is good overall. Pupils have very good opportunities for enrichment. Staffing, accommodation and resources are good.

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

- Information and communication technology (ICT) is successfully taught through other subjects, but resources to develop skills in logging data and design work are limited.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) in Years 10 and 11 is a successful Vocational GCSE course developed in partnership with two other schools in West Cumbria.
- Many pupils find it helpful with homework to have access from their home to the school's ICT network.
- Very good opportunities for enrichment through sport, drama and music attract an excellent level of participation by pupils of all abilities, and lead to very high achievement and representation at county level.
- Science College status has greatly improved ICT provision to aid learning in many subjects.

## **Commentary**

36. Overall, the curriculum is good, with some innovative features. The curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements except for a daily act of collective worship. Information and communication technology (ICT) is successfully taught through other subjects to pupils in Years 7 and 8. Discrete ICT lessons in Year 9 consolidate their skills. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 take mathematics, English language, English literature and three separate sciences for examination at GCSE Level. Everyone also takes non-examination physical education, religious education and citizenship. In addition to compulsory subjects, pupils select from a wide choice of options, most of which are GCSE courses. The range of alternative certificated Vocational Courses is limited in Keswick compared to elsewhere. Information and communication technology (ICT) is a successful Vocational Course, developed by the school in partnership with two others in West Cumbria, and now other schools in the county have started to use this course. Opportunities to take courses in leisure and tourism and practical food have not proved popular, which is surprising given the level of tourism in the locality.

37. Support for learning outside the school day is good. Provision includes homework clubs, which are well attended, and popular computer clubs run by highly skilled technicians. The school library opens for an hour after school as well as lunchtimes, and is so popular that demand exceeds

the space available. All pupils may connect to the school ICT network from home, using it to access the Internet, which is protected by the school's safeguards to prevent access to inappropriate sites. Many pupils find this a useful means of completing class work or homework and consulting teachers *via* the network's email facility.

38. Opportunities for enrichment of the curriculum are very good. All pupils study three sciences. In Years 8 to 11 a large number study two foreign languages. The provision for drama is enriched by both amateur and professional links with the local theatre. Many pupils take instrumental music lessons and participate in a variety of performance groups, which extend their musical learning. Pupils taking double award ICT enhance their work with a half course of business studies.

39. Participation in sport is excellent, with very many opportunities for pupils of all capabilities to take part. Teams and clubs are open to all pupils. The school makes every effort, successfully, to accommodate pupils interested in being involved, and this leads to several teams competing in inter-house matches and against other schools. Achievement in extra-curricular sport is particularly high in team games, and many pupils and students represent their county in rugby, soccer, hockey, netball and cricket.

40. Outdoor activities feature strongly. Almost all pupils in Year 7 do the 'Skiddaw Walk', which gives a great sense of personal fulfilment. Pupils in Year 8 take part in orienteering, and all pupils in Year 9 have an outdoor activity day, when they have a choice of activities such as gill scrambling, canoeing, climbing and orienteering. Canoeing after school, and at weekends in the autumn and summer term, is popular but numbers are restricted because of safety regulations. About 40 pupils in Years 10 and 11 take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Bronze Award and continue to higher levels in the Sixth Form.

41. Because teachers are well qualified and experienced and teach to their specialist subjects, they bring a good level of expertise to the curriculum. An advanced skills teacher (AST) in religious education adds expertise to the quality of work in the subject, thereby enhancing pupils' achievement. The overall match of support staff to the curriculum is satisfactory. Technical support is very good, for example in science and art, and a network manager and two technicians maintain ICT systems. However, there is insufficient specialist support in design and technology.

42. Accommodation is generally good, except for concerns over design and technology workshops. Here the combination of relatively small rooms and over-large Years 7 to 9 classes restricts movement and access to machinery. This in turn limits the scope of work that can be undertaken. Resource levels are generally good except in design and technology. Science College status has improved ICT provision. For example, the use of data projectors and interactive whiteboards has enhanced teaching and learning, particularly in science and mathematics lessons. Access to the expanding school ICT network improves learning, and includes giving specific support for pupils with SEN. However, this widens the contrast with the limited opportunities pupils have to use ICT applications, for example in logging experimental data in science, and for design and manufacturing.

## **Sixth Form**

Students study within a broad range of subjects, with very good opportunities for enrichment. Accommodation and resources are good.

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

- A good range of AS and A Level courses is available in the Sixth Form, but the range of Vocational Courses is limited.
- A good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities is available to the Sixth Form.
- Excellent opportunities enable students to make an outstanding contribution to the life of the school community whilst enhancing their self-esteem and personal development.
- Science College status has led to innovation in new courses.



## Commentary

43. A good range of courses is available to students in the Sixth Form, leading to AS Level in Year 12 and A Level in Year 13. The school is responsive to requests from students and their parents for specific courses or combinations of subjects. For example, Advanced Level physical education is now in its third year. Not only is it a popular choice, taken by a quarter of the students in Year 12, but high standards are achieved compared with similar schools. In keeping with the school's Science College status, courses in science for public understanding and geology are popular choices at AS Level; and Media studies and drama offer further opportunities to foster students' aptitudes and interests.

44. The range of Vocational Courses is more limited. Available in Year 12 are Vocational GCSEs in health and social care, and in leisure and tourism, and a three-unit course in ICT, equivalent to an AS qualification. A 12-unit course in business studies, leading to an AVCE, equivalent to two A Level awards, is also a popular choice. However, no realistic alternative provision of Vocational Courses is available in the area and, although the students in the school say that the curriculum suits their needs very well, nearly a quarter of students in Year 11 leave the school each year. The school has tried in the recent past to introduce a range of Vocational Courses, but without success. Nevertheless, for students who leave school after taking GCSEs, the curriculum based firmly around AS and A Level courses appears to be unsuitable.

45. The curriculum in general education is very good, both in terms of the course in general studies and across the curriculum. Students are encouraged to explore their ideas and values in most lessons and also to listen carefully and respond sensitively to the views of others. Religious beliefs are well explored by the large number who take religious studies, but there is no basic religious education for all students in Year 12 and only a small amount in Year 13. Students have many opportunities to debate contemporary issues and they do this with vigour and enthusiasm, whilst showing their respect for those with whom they disagree by the courtesy with which they treat them.

46. The school does not meet the requirement for religious education for all students in Year 12, and a limited amount is included in general studies in Year 13. Nevertheless, the school does a great deal to promote a very high level of social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness in its Sixth Form, through lessons, general studies, tutor periods and assemblies. In addition, Sixth Form students are routinely given high levels of responsibility. For example, they supervise the lower school at lunchtime, escort prospective pupils and their parents around school, act as mentors and 'buddies' to Years 7 and 8 students, and successfully manage the work of younger students in their efforts to raise money for charity.

47. A good range of extra-curricular activities is available to students, who are keen to support their school, especially in sporting activities and the arts. Sixth Form students played a major part, for example, in organising and performing in the well-attended school concert that took place during the inspection week.

48. Overall resources for learning in the Sixth Form are good. Most areas of the curriculum are well provided for, and students make good use of what is available.

## Care, guidance and support

The overall provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is good. Support, advice and guidance are good. Procedures for involving pupils by seeking and acting upon their views are satisfactory.

### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils have very good and trusting relationships with adults at the school, and these are supported by effective procedures for pastoral care and guidance.
- Induction arrangements for pupils joining the school are very good.
- Procedures to ensure that pupils work in a healthy and safe environment are satisfactory.
- Information about pupils' academic performance is not used with sufficient thoroughness and rigour in every subject department to promote higher achievement.
- Advice to pupils on further study and career opportunities is very good.

### Commentary

49. The school offers a good standard of care to its pupils. The child protection policy is comprehensive. The Child Protection Officer has not received recent training but is fully aware of her duties and responsibilities and has shared information with all other members of staff. The school has a well-equipped, dedicated first-aid room, and benefits from the services of a full-time nurse and qualified first aiders. The school keeps meticulous records of accidents and the administration of drugs. It commissioned a detailed Health and Safety Audit in July 2003 and is presently addressing items of concern identified in the report. An additional item observed during the inspection week has been reported to the school.

50. Relationships at the school are very good. Pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and those interviewed during the inspection week confirm that they feel safe and secure in school and know whom to go to if they have problems or difficulties. The pastoral system works very well to provide a high level of support, guidance and advice to pupils.

51. The school's comprehensive arrangements for monitoring pupils' progress throughout Years 7 to 11 effectively support their development. A well-managed process of recording pupils' progress and concerns is linked to a merit and commendation system which successfully brings together subject teachers, form tutors, year heads, the headmaster, and parents. Parents particularly value the way it informs them of any difficulties, so that they can help, and of the successes that their children achieve. Pupils particularly value the interest the headmaster takes in their success.

52. Target-setting is firmly established from Year 10 onwards and incorporates a useful programme of individual interviews between tutors and pupils to track progress and negotiate areas for attention. Implementing an equivalent process for pupils in Years 7 to 9 has been thwarted by lack of finance. However, information about pupils' academic performance is not used with sufficient thoroughness and rigour in every subject department to support pupils and actively promote higher achievement. In turn, pupils are unsure about how exactly to improve. There are areas of exemplary practice, for example in religious education, which deserve to be built upon widely throughout the school. The code of practice for pupils with SEN is effective, and pupils, parents and outside agencies are appropriately involved in guidance and in decisions for future arrangements.

53. Induction arrangements for new pupils work very well. Pupils are given a valuable opportunity to experience the school before transfer, and information evenings for parents of pupils give full information about school life and the range of courses available. New Year 7 pupils first attend school on a day dedicated to them, when no other pupils attend, to enable them to settle in quickly. As a result of the comprehensive and sensitive transfer arrangements, pupils make a very good start to their secondary school life.

54. The school satisfactorily involves pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views. The new school council is being developed year on year as a vehicle to involve pupils in discussion and decision-making. However, at present only Years 7 and 8 are involved and some older pupils feel they are excluded from the decision-making process. Pupils' views are also obtained in PHSE and citizenship lessons, but this area of the school's work is relatively under-developed.

55. The school gives very good guidance and advice to pupils on further study or career opportunities. Very good use is made of the Connexions Service. All Year 10 pupils take part in a useful work-experience programme within the community. Effective procedures ensure good advice to Year 9 pupils for choosing subjects in Year 10. Careers and Sixth Form teachers provide valuable advice and support to pupils embarking upon education after Year 11.

## **Sixth Form**

Support, advice and guidance are excellent. The school makes satisfactory arrangements for seeking and acting upon students' views.

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

- The school gives students excellent support and guidance when they are planning their Sixth Form studies.
- Students are prepared very well for entry to higher education or to employment.
- Sixth Form students feel that the school does not provide enough opportunity for them to contribute formally to its development.

## **Commentary**

56. The school gives students excellent support and guidance whilst they are planning their Sixth Form studies and throughout Years 12 and 13. Form tutors know their students very well and provide them with very good pastoral care and encouragement. Students are given excellent guidance on managing the demands of A Level courses and respond well to personal and academic targets, which are reviewed regularly. Specialist subject support is also excellent and students freely acknowledge that everything is done to help them to get the most out of their time in the Sixth Form.

57. Most students continue their studies in higher education after leaving school. The head of Sixth Form and his colleagues prepare them very well for this stage in their education by sharing their expertise freely and, especially, by developing in them the skills they need to make well-informed choices for themselves. Similarly high quality advice and support are given to those who prefer to enter the world of work at this stage, both personally and through the careers library.

58. Students appreciate the help they are given and make a major contribution to the school community in return. The system for appointment of prefects is itself a valuable experience for students, and one which helps them to grow in maturity and self-esteem.

59. Students are extremely supportive of their school and are very proud of the place the school occupies in the community. Their relationships with staff of the school are outstanding. However, the newly formed school council does not at present involve Sixth Form students, who feel that the school does not always give them an appropriate forum through which to influence its development formally.

## How well the school works in partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are good, with the community they are very good, and with other schools and colleges they are excellent.

### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- The school has positive and effective links with parents.
- The school has very good mechanisms for the transfer of pupils.
- The school makes good arrangements for informing parents about their children's progress.
- Excellent links with other schools, and very good links with the community, greatly enhance the work of the school.

### Commentary

60. Parents have a very high opinion of the school, which is popular and over subscribed. The overwhelming majority of parents feel that their children are making good progress, behave well, are not bullied or harassed and are encouraged to become mature. Inspection findings concur with these views.

61. The school prospectus is very well produced, has a welcoming tone, and contains good information about the school and its policies. The governors' annual report to parents is very informative and contains all statutory information. Newsletters produced each term are of good quality and give good and interesting information about school events and points of interest.

62. A significant minority of parents thought that they were not well informed about their children's progress, although arrangements embracing reports, parents' evenings, and specific contact about concerns and success are comprehensive. The school frequently writes to parents about any areas for concern or to congratulate pupils for consistently good behaviour or good work. Annual parents' meetings to discuss pupils' progress are enhanced by separate evening meetings to discuss GCSE options, further and higher education. However, the annual written reports on pupils' progress do not give an explanation of grades awarded and in some subjects targets are not clear.

63. A small number of parents give useful help in school, for example in the library and with school trips. The school has a very active parent teacher association which arranges numerous fund-raising social events. Their successful efforts in raising several thousand pounds for school funds are much appreciated.

64. The school does not have formalised arrangements for consulting parents on a regular basis but does seek views on specific issues, for example a change in the school uniform. A minority of parents feel the school does not seek their views enough, and this is an area for development within the framework of the principles for seeking to give *best value*.

65. Very good links with the immediate and wider community do much to broaden and enrich the school's curriculum while increasing its standing locally and further afield. Salient features are the stimulating presence of boarders from different regions and overseas and the strong support of local businesses for the recently successful Science College bid. Many local organisations greatly help the school's provision, including for example the Rotary Club and the West Cumbria Development Agency. The school's justified pride in its prime Lakeland location is aided by its association with the Environment Agency and the Lake District National Park Authority.

66. Excellent links with other schools and colleges lead to very productive contact with all stages of education from nursery to universities. The ICT networking of six primary schools has paid dividends already in providing continuity as pupils change schools. Partnership with the secondary schools of the West Cumbria Consortium through Leading Edge status has resulted in a diverse range of valued in-service training for staff.

67. Additionally, the school's robust provision of community education successfully blends its own life and work with that of the locality. Most evident is the intensive use of performing arts, sports and computer facilities by the public. These valuable links are emphasised in the school's prospectus and the development programme for Science College status. Imaginative plans for creating a community centre of excellence in science, mathematics and ICT are fast becoming reality as the new Crosthwaite centre takes shape.

68. The school has set itself challenging targets to raise its very good existing links to the level of excellence. The potential benefits for English and drama of developing links with the local Lakeside Theatre are self evident, but the possibilities offered by a uniquely rich environment to geography and history are currently underexploited. The very good contributions of local clergy to assemblies and religious education are not matched by any personal representation of other faiths.

69. High quality care, support and guidance have been sustained and, where appropriate, developed further. They make a major contribution to the success of the school.

## **Sixth Form**

Students benefit from very good community links and excellent links with other schools and colleges.

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

- Excellent advice is available on entry to the Sixth Form, and this is extended to those who transfer from other schools.
- The school uses excellent links with universities and employers to give a high level of support to students who are preparing for entry to higher education or employment.
- Students are proud to make a major contribution to the place the school occupies in the community.

## **Commentary**

70. The school has very good arrangements for the transfer of pupils. Excellent advice is provided on entry to the Sixth Form, both for current students and their parents in Year 11, and for those who join the Sixth Form from other schools or from overseas, as boarders. The Careers Advisory Service comes into school on a regular basis to give advice, and Sixth Form staff are very proactive in helping students with their choice of future courses or careers. Pupils and parents confirm that they feel the level of support given to students for the next stage of their education is excellent.

71. There are excellent links to colleges and universities. Students wishing to investigate a degree in engineering have contact with Durham University Faculty of Engineering which, along with a local engineering firm, sponsors between four and six students a year. A week is spent in the faculty, and the firm provides work experience. Other opportunities arise from links with Leeds University's Geological Faculty and several faculties of the Manchester Victoria University, all of which offer students the chance to study within the university environment for a week. Glasgow University provides visits in preparation for applications for both Medicine and Veterinary Science, and the school maintains very productive links with The Queen's College, Oxford. Many other links with other colleges too numerous to mention all form part of the excellent partnerships found in the Sixth Form.

72. During their time in the Sixth Form, students sustain and often develop the community links they have experienced in the main school. Those who choose to undertake work experience contribute much to the school's reputation for producing a skilful work force in areas as diverse as industry and law. Independent study and research in school bring students into regular contact with members of the public who use the school's facilities. Some Sixth Form students gain much from studying food hygiene together with adult members of the local catering community.



73. Students are generally very pleased to comply with the school's expectation that they contribute to the wider life of the school. In addition to acting as prefects within the school's own community, they engage fully in the musical, sporting and charitable activities that bind the school closely to the larger community it serves.

74. Since the last inspection, the very good links with the community and education partners have been maintained and developed further. They make a major contribution to the success of the school.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Governance and the leadership given by the headmaster are very good. Management throughout the school is good. Financial management is effective in ensuring that the school operates within its means, but it has given restricted support for improving achievement in Years 7 to 9.

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

- The school is very well governed. Governors meet statutory requirements, but cannot provide an act of collective worship every day.
- The headmaster gives very good leadership and shares the governors' very high commitment and outstanding dedication to sustaining high standards in all the school's work.
- Most heads of subject lead and manage their departments very well, some well, and a minority satisfactorily.
- Departments lack consistency in their use of performance information to plan and evaluate teaching. This inconsistency restricts pupils' achievement in some subjects.

### **Commentary**

75. Keswick School has a very effective governing body that shares with the headmaster outstanding dedication to sustaining high standards of examination performance, personal development, and achievement. Governors know the school well through frequent involvement with the senior leadership team and by seeing at first hand the work within subject departments. A well-organised committee structure ensures that roles are properly undertaken and duties discharged. Very good use is made of working parties to deal with specific issues, such as the successful achievement of Science College status, and more recently to act upon issues of health and safety following a comprehensive survey. Governors value the part that morning assembly plays in school life, and know that the requirements for a daily act of collective worship cannot be met because of restricted space. They are assured that pupils' spiritual development is strong because of outstanding work in religious education and the many contributions elsewhere in the curriculum.

76. The headmaster provides very good leadership. His very substantial commitment, high aspirations, clear vision and outstanding sense of purpose do much to enhance the ethos for learning within the school and its spirit of community. Because of this the school has been at the forefront of local development, first as a Beacon School, and now with Leading Edge and Science College Status. It clearly supports both the promotion and continuity of learning with partner schools.

77. Most heads of subjects lead and manage their departments very well. Some, notably in art and design, ICT, physical education and religious education, take their subjects forward to excellent effect. Departmental management in geography and history is satisfactory. Arrangements for pupils with SEN are very well managed. Very good leadership and flexible, individually targeted provision are the key to the success of this aspect of the school's work. Some subject departments are better than others in making effective use of information about pupils' attainments to plan teaching and learning for different groups of pupils. Departments have a high degree of autonomy, but inconsistency in exploiting the wealth of information available to inform and implement development plans limits pupils' achievement.

78. Members of the leadership group efficiently discharge their managerial and administrative roles. The performance management programme is run satisfactorily and priorities are linked to those for whole-school improvement. However, the programme has not made an impact on raising standards because monitoring lessons and evaluating the success of teaching vary between and within departments. Importantly, it does not draw on the wealth of expertise in the school with enough rigour to ensure universally high levels of effectiveness.

79. The current programme of induction for new staff is satisfactory. The school develops its staff expertise through training courses. Knowledge gained on courses is satisfactorily disseminated to other teachers, and this improves their expertise. The school makes a very good contribution to initial teacher-training partnerships with local and national providers. The school has stable staffing but is beginning to have difficulty attracting appropriately qualified teachers.

80. Governors ensure that financial administration is diligent. Arrangements for day-to-day and longer-term control are assiduous and beyond reproach. Prudent financial management recovered a potential deficit when spending exceeded income, although this has delayed some wanted developments, such as target-setting arrangements in Years 7 to 9.

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

<b>Income and expenditure (£)</b>	
Total income	3,533,699.00
Total expenditure	3,610,040.00
Expenditure per pupil	3,725.00

<b>Balances (£)</b>	
Balance from previous year	122,418.00
Balance carried forward to the next	46,077.00

81. Principles of best value are established satisfactorily. They are secured in some areas; for example, spending seeks value for money. Consultation in seeking Science College status was extensive, but is limited in checking parents' perspective. The governors make comparisons with local and similar schools to gauge pupils' attainment. Governors challenge themselves and the headmaster to assure the quality of work in the school and ensure that decisions are well founded, though there is scope for considering alternatives to existing practices to promote higher achievement.

82. Clear and purposeful strategic leadership has been sustained since the previous inspection. Aspects of management identified for improvement have been substantially though not completely addressed. The school improvement plan sets out attention to key priorities, though the criteria for success the plan contains focus more upon the activities to address them than upon the outcomes. Governors are diligent in judging the success of the development plan, and recognise how in future their evaluation can be aided by clearly stating at the outset the results expected from development work.

## **Sixth Form**

The governors and head of Sixth Form work together to provide very good leadership and shape the direction of the Sixth Form. Management is good overall.

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

- Leadership of the Sixth Form is good overall. The leadership of the head of Sixth Form and his deputy are very good.
- The head of Sixth Form has a clear vision of the place of the Sixth Form in the school and communicates it well to his colleagues.
- Management of the Sixth Form curriculum is good, and students are very well supported in getting the best out of their studies.
- Monitoring of the work of the Sixth Form is satisfactory, but heads of subject do not make sufficient use of assessment data to raise attainment in their subject areas.
- The school does not fulfil its statutory obligations for a daily act of collective worship, or for the provision of religious education in Year 12.

## Commentary

83. The governors work closely with the headmaster to promote the highest standards of attainment and personal development in the Sixth Form. They understand and value the outstanding contribution that the Sixth Form makes to the place of the school in the community, and seek to maintain the commitment of senior staff to an inclusive Sixth Form in which all students are supported as well as possible in their aspirations. Although the statutory obligation to provide a daily act of collective is not met, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the Sixth Form is very good.

84. The head of Sixth Form works closely with his deputy and form tutors to promote these ideals. Together, they communicate the governors' vision for the school to their colleagues, creating an excellent sense of purpose with high aspirations, in students and teachers alike. They successfully promote the highest standards of personal development in the Sixth Form students, who are outstanding ambassadors for the school in the community.

85. Management of the Sixth Form is good overall. The curriculum is well managed to provide for the needs of most students in the school. Attempts have been made to increase the provision of Vocational Courses, but these have not proved popular. Nevertheless, about a quarter of Year 11 students leave the school each year, and some of these, at least, could benefit from a wider range of Vocational Courses. Progress of students is carefully monitored, and high quality support is readily available for students who need it, whether academically or in a broader range of skills. However, the wealth of information about students which the school collects is not used proactively to point to ways in which the school could improve still further.

86. Monitoring of teachers and performance management in the Sixth Form are satisfactory. As in the main school, evaluation of teaching is delegated to heads of department, but the work done to develop teaching styles in the Sixth Form has not so far raised standards far enough.

87. Financial management has been effective in ensuring that the Sixth Form neither contributes to nor draws on funds allocated to the main school. In view of the high academic standards reached by students, and their outstanding personal development, the Sixth Form gives very good value for money.

## **BOARDING**

The overall quality of the boarding provision is very good.

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

- Boarding provision is very well led, managed and administered.
- Boarding pupils make an important contribution to the ethos of the school.
- The policies and procedures that enable boarding pupils to live and work in a safe and secure environment are comprehensive, and National Care Standards are met.
- The relationship between the pupils is very good, with the older pupils looking after the younger ones. The pupils see themselves as a family.
- Many of the older pupils, however, feel that their views could be given greater prominence and influence life within the Boarding House more effectively.

### **Commentary**

88. Pupils resident in boarding house are very much part of the school. Many come from abroad and, because they add cultural diversity to the life of the school, they contribute greatly to its ethos.

89. Strong leadership by the headmaster, and very clear lines of communication between the school's senior leadership and the Head of House, promote very effective day-to-day management and administration. Governors and the headmaster maintain a close and active interest in the care and welfare of the boarding pupils and ensure that policies are diligently put into practice.

90. Comprehensive procedures enable the pupils to live and work in a safe environment. Child protection is securely in place, and although formal training does not extend to all care staff, they do know the procedures to follow. All staff provide a consistently high level of care which is reflected in attention to health and safety, a very high standard of cleanliness, effective supervision that is not overbearing, and diligent arrangements for personal and medical guidance. National Care Standards are met.

91. Pupils benefit from and respect their accommodation, which is good overall. A programme of refurbishment has already renewed bathroom and toilet facilities, and pupils are very pleased with them. Sleeping accommodation is comfortable, with good facilities for storing personal items. Most bedrooms are shared and not overcrowded, and the school takes great care when arranging roommates.

92. Although space for personal study is limited in some bedrooms, support for academic work is good. Younger pupils have supervised homework together in a classroom. Older pupils work in the house. Of particular note is the fact that all have ready access both to the use of computing facilities which are linked to the school network, and to a quiet area for private study or reading. Many teachers make themselves available out of school hours to give help and support. By Year 11 all boarding pupils achieve well and some very well. Parents are well informed about their children's progress, for example about settling into the boarding house, and particularly about any specific achievements and difficulties. Annual school reports include information about personal development relevant to boarding.

93. Provision for boarders' personal development is made within the school rather than through a separately structured approach. Many facets of life in the boarding house make an important contribution. For example, the buddy system helps new boarders' personal development and fosters a sense of belonging. Many comment on how they value the family atmosphere of the house. A high proportion have an active involvement with local churches and attend Sunday services. Leisure and cultural activities for boarders include visits to local theatres and cinema, as well as engaging them in collaborative activities such as team games and barbecues. Good common rooms have TV and video facilities. Representatives take part in democratic discussion as members of the food and

house councils. Despite this, many of the older pupils feel that, although their views are sought, they could be given greater prominence and could more directly influence life within the boarding house.

# **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, 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:**

- English results in the Year 9 national test and GCSE examinations have been consistently high.
- Pupils' speaking, listening, reading and writing skills are well developed, although the National Literacy Strategy has not been fully implemented in Years 7 to 9.
- Target setting is unsatisfactory.
- Gifted and talented pupils are not sufficiently intellectually challenged.
- Teaching and learning are not formally monitored.

#### **Commentary**

94. In 2003, the results of the Year 9 national test and GCSE English and English literature examinations were well above national average. When compared with results in schools where pupils had similar prior attainment, test and examination results were average. This represents satisfactory achievement. Over the past three years the performance of boys in Year 9 national tests has been further above their national average than the performance of girls. Results in the GCSE English and English literature examinations in 2003 were well above the national average. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades of A\* and A was average. The performance of girls in English language and English literature was better than the performance of boys.

95. For current pupils, standards are high by Years 9 and 11. Overall, pupils' achievement is good. Pupils with SEN achieve well. However, the achievement of gifted and talented pupils does not reflect their abilities, and these pupils need further intellectual challenge and support. The National Literacy Strategy has not been implemented to promote improvement in Years 7 to 9. Nevertheless, by Year 9 pupils speak with a high degree of fluency and respond thoughtfully to what they hear. Their evaluations of their peers' presentations are articulate and objective, yet expressed with courtesy and empathy. For example, in a Year 8 lesson a boy gave a meticulously researched presentation about sharks. His classmates asked pertinent questions before offering suggestions for improvement of his delivery. When reading, pupils identify stylistic features of literature and analyse with insight. For example, one Year 9 class identified ways in which Shakespeare used the witches in *Macbeth* to increase dramatic tension before pupils wrote a letter in character as Banquo. Their writing is confident, well developed, organised and accurate. By Year 11 pupils contribute fluently to speaking and listening tasks. They use vocabulary precisely to suit specific purposes. Their coursework includes very good discursive and analytical writing. Their response to literature is detailed and evaluative. For example, one boy wrote a well-argued essay on the evolving relationship between King Lear and his daughter Cordelia. Higher attaining pupils employ ambitious vocabulary. Their writing shows assured control of a range of styles.

96. Teaching and learning are good throughout Years 7 to 11. Teachers use their specialist knowledge to give pupils a very good understanding of texts and of the features that make writing more effective. Activities are well matched to lesson objectives and motivate pupils well.

The department does not have a satisfactory system of target setting. Teachers do not help pupils to understand how well they have done and are vague about what pupils need to do to reach the next National Curriculum Level. In turn, pupils are unclear about what they need to do to improve. Teachers' marking of pupils' exercise books is inconsistent across the department.

97. Leadership of the department is good. Although the department does not have a scheme of work to provide a focus for raising standards, there is a strong sense of direction and a common purpose. However, teaching is not systematically evaluated to identify areas for further development. Organisation is efficient. The quality of provision in the department has improved since the previous inspection. The collective strength of the team of teachers, under good leadership, gives grounds to believe that the English department's capacity for further improvement is very good.

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

98. Although the framework of the National Literacy Strategy is not in place in English classes, the school has an effective strategy for teaching the basic skills of literacy across the curriculum. The school has a comprehensive literacy policy, which teachers put into practice. All teachers have received training to help them develop pupils' writing, speaking and listening.

99. Most subjects make very good provision for the development of literacy skills. Teachers consistently place a strong emphasis on the use of technical vocabulary and hence pupils are accurate in its use. In French, for example, teachers highlight the application of correct grammatical structures. Pupils are given opportunities to produce extended written work, as in religious education, where writing frames help pupils to construct appropriate responses.

100. Standards of literacy are high and enable pupils to achieve well. Pupils are fluent speakers and thoroughly enjoy discussions. They read fluently, with very good comprehension, and make effective use of higher-order reading skills such as skimming and scanning. They communicate their knowledge of subjects very clearly in writing.

### **Modern foreign languages**

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

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

- Leadership is excellent, and very good joint management strongly motivates the teaching team.
- Generally good, and frequently excellent, teaching leads to very good achievement.
- The rich, varied curriculum enthuses and engages most pupils and pupils.
- Thorough assessment tracks each pupil's attainment and predicts future outcomes.
- Information and communication technology (ICT), though occasionally well used, is insufficiently central to teaching and learning.
- The most recent GCSE results in French were well below average.

### **Commentary**

101. The results of the most recent teacher assessments in French and German at the end of Year 9 were well above average. In 2003, GCSE results in French were, unusually, well below the national average, owing to staffing issues. In previous years, GCSE results in French were above or well above average. Girls' and boys' GCSE results in German have been well above average for the past 3 years. The rising trend in German has been faster than that found nationally, and standards currently attained in French have restored the upward trend to above average outcomes. Girls continue to attain higher levels than boys in both languages.

102. The current achievement of boys and girls at the end of Year 9 is very good in both French and German. Pupils with SEN achieve in line with their peers, as a result of skilled, sensitive support

by teaching assistants. Very good listening skills are fostered through lengthy exposure in lessons to rapid, authentic French and German, so pupils' speaking is also good. Teachers' expertise, and the firm, very well planned framework they provide for pupils, has resulted in good achievement in French and very good progress and achievement in the more stable and consistent German at the end of Year 11.

103. Teaching is never less than satisfactory. In French, teaching is good, and it is very good in German. In both languages a minority of teaching is excellent. All teachers have very good command of the languages and usually encourage high standards in their pupils. They manage their classes well, often very skilfully, sharing lesson objectives at the start and reviewing pupils' achievement at the end. The time pupils spend actively on short, stimulating tasks is maximised, so their coverage of language skills and knowledge is almost always complete. Lessons, which are usually taught at a fast pace, are dynamic and varied, comprising games and songs as well as discrete, challenging grammar sections. Teachers occasionally talk too much, so a few pupils remain patiently passive and inactive.

104. Teachers assess pupils' achievement continuously, using quick tests and elicited responses to check on the effectiveness of their learning. Formal assessment is well structured and recorded. It is closely related to National Curriculum Levels in Years 7 to 9 and to potential GCSE grades in Years 10 and 11, so pupils know how well they are doing and how they can improve. The German coursework seen was particularly well written and presented, a minority of pupils using ICT well for clarity and style.

105. The curriculum is good, offering either French or German to all pupils in Years 7 to 9, and both languages to a substantial minority. Most pupils benefit from studying one language to GCSE Level, but option constraints prevent many from continuing with both, despite their attaining high levels in Year 9. Pupils enjoy and enthuse about enriching activities, which range from the 'French café' and a language festival, to study visits in France and the German exchange.

106. The heads of French and German provide excellent leadership by example, inspiring other colleagues, including student teachers, to work hard and successfully. Their very good management and monitoring have resulted in a large measure of uniformity in teaching style and the creation of bright, supportive learning resources and environment. Improvement on the good standards remarked upon in the last report has been correspondingly good. The very good ICT skills evidently possessed by teachers and pupils are, however, insufficiently used to promote this increasingly essential means of communication.

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

A very able Year 11 German set, who often work at Advanced Level, were revising GCSE topics while honing their exceptional listening and reading skills.

The atmosphere in the lesson was electric. The imminence of the GCSE examination and pupils' finely tuned language skills created a confident air of anticipation. The teacher's efficient use of time and the varied, challenging tasks were planned with precision. By tapping astutely into pupils' learning preferences, she extracted maximum benefit from the lesson. The class quickly and industriously completed a demanding vocabulary test. Many pupils showed the extent of their knowledge by volunteering further associated words and phrases. A productive conversational interlude taxed pupils' initiative and imagination, as they manipulated printed cards to create their own speaking prompts. Their lively dialogues, clearly audible amid the purposeful buzz of conversation, were mature and expressive. Listening and reading tasks, dealing respectively with students' gap years and immigration, were pitched at levels exceeding the demands of GCSE. To stimulate pupils' ability to deduce and infer meaning from context, the teacher first required pupils to decide in independent groups what the questions, key vocabulary and answers might be. Her illustrative use of conventional resources was skilled, as she and the class discussed the topics in authentic German. To summarise, pupils fluently reviewed their recent learning and its purpose.



## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

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

- Leadership of the subject is very good, generating enthusiasm for improving pupils' learning opportunities.
- Teaching is very good overall. Teachers' very good subject knowledge provides pupils with well-structured learning experiences.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used very well to stimulate pupils' interest in their learning.
- In Year 9 tests, pupils attain standards which are well above the national expectation.
- Pupils' very positive attitude to mathematics enhances learning.

### **Commentary**

107. In 2003, results in Year 9 tests were well above the level expected nationally and represented very good achievement by pupils, continuing the rising trend of improvement. Boys' results were better than those of girls. Results were similar to those in science and above those in English, and were well above the results of similar schools. Year 11 GCSE examination results were above the national average and in line with those gained in similar schools, representing satisfactory achievement. This was a dip in a previously rising trend, and was due in part to disruptions in staffing and management in recent years.

108. Achievement in lessons is good, and standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 in work seen are above those expected nationally. The quality of work reflects pupils' very good attitudes to learning, and their books contain mathematically rigorous solutions to questions. However, there is a wide variation in the quality of graph work and diagrams. Pupils' very good behaviour and mature attitudes enhance the learning opportunities on offer and enable rapid progress to be made. All groups of pupils achieve equally well, including those with SEN and the higher attaining pupils. The work seen shows no difference in the achievements of boys and girls.

109. Teaching is very good overall, particularly in Years 10 and 11 when compared to Years 7 to 9, where there was one unsatisfactory lesson. Teachers use ICT very well as a teaching tool. And this engages the interest and participation of pupils in their learning. Lessons are well planned and pupils are encouraged to work at a challenging pace, which ensures rapid progress. Although there are some good instances of pupils' active participation in lessons and some very good development of pupils' thinking skills, the predominant teacher-directed style limits the involvement of pupils in their own learning. Where teaching was least successful, there was not enough challenge for pupils and the pace of learning was too slow.

110. Leadership is very good and management of the subject is good. In the short time since the appointment of the head of department there have been significant developments in the subject. He has very good vision for future development within the subject and has plans for further improvements in provision. The development of Science College status has provided good resources which are enhancing learning opportunities for pupils. There are sufficient, well-qualified teachers for the curriculum, which contributes very well to the quality of provision. Assessment is good overall, but the analysis of examination and test results to find the patterns of performance of different groups of pupils is less well developed. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, especially since the appointment of the new head of department.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

111. Whole-school training has enhanced the development of pupils' numeracy across the curriculum. The head of mathematics fosters the contribution subject departments make to pupils' skills. In turn, pupils' mathematical skills support their learning well in other subjects. In science

subjects, pupils use graphs effectively, together with a wide variety of measures and compound units in their calculations. Modern language subjects use times, prices and simple graphs in their target languages. During ICT lessons, pupils handle very large numbers when producing mathematical models of the real world. Graphic skills are developed widely and well in other subjects through the medium of ICT.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils are interested in science lessons and their behaviour is very good.
- Since the school became a science college, the department has made particularly good progress with implementing its development plan.
- Teaching is effective but pupils are not always sufficiently challenged, with the result that although examination standards are well above national averages they could be even better.
- Marking gives pupils little idea of how to improve their work.
- The new head of science is an effective leader who understands the need to enhance teaching where it is uninspiring, and to improve marking.

### Commentary

112. Pupils join the school in Year 7 with above average standards in science. Subsequent progress is good and pupils achieve very well, so that standards at the end of Year 9 are well above national expectations. All pupils then take separate science subjects at GCSE. This makes it difficult to compare their results directly with those in other schools, where double-subject combined science is the norm. In 2003, the proportion obtaining A\* to C grades in chemistry, biology and physics exceeded the national average in combined science. However, these results represented good progress only in physics. In chemistry, and in biology at the higher grades A and A\*, standards should have been higher. This is clear from the results which the same pupils had previously attained in Year 9. In 2001 and 2002, however, pupils made good progress in all three subjects, and current Year 11 work indicates that results in 2004 should be similarly good. Observation of lessons and analysis of marked work during the inspection corroborates the evidence from tests and examinations over the past three years. Pupils' achievement throughout the school is good, though not outstanding. This applies equally to boys and girls as well as to those with SEN.

113. Teaching varies from satisfactory to very good, with most lessons being good or better. In the best lessons, objectives are clear to both teachers and pupils. Good use is made of facilities such as the new data projectors. Pupils are active and teachers employ a variety of approaches to stimulate their understanding. For example, in one Year 9 lesson, pupils effectively learned about photosynthesis through teacher exposition, annotated diagrams and video animation, as well as by direct observation of leaves through a microscope. Some lessons, in contrast, are poorly structured: pupils have too little say in what they do, because listening and writing occupy a disproportionate amount of time. For example, in a Year 11 lesson dealing with atomic structure, the class was passive, working silently to copy information with no real stimulus to think. Marking is inconsistent throughout the whole department, varying in standard from painstaking to perfunctory. The assessment system is not universally followed by staff and, even at its best, achieves little because written comments do not do enough to help pupils to improve their understanding of science.

114. Leadership and management by the new head of science are good. He is aware that the quality of lessons varies too much between individual teachers and knows that monitoring, both by direct observation and by analysis of assessment data, is under-developed. He has plans for

tackling these issues and for raising achievement towards the excellence of which pupils are well capable. His effective leadership is well demonstrated by the department's progress towards realising the vision of a Science College, which is already influencing both the school and the local community. Progress since the last inspection is good.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision for ICT is **excellent**.

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

- The very large teaching team has a very high level of skill in ICT.
- Up-to-date staff training of very high quality, teaching of high quality, and very high levels of resources lead to very high levels of learning and achievement.
- Assessment methods planned in detail and shared with pupils allow them to improve their work.
- The achievement of gifted and talented pupils is not assessed.

### **Commentary**

115. Pupils enter the school with a wide spread of attainment in ICT. Following initial assessment, teaching at appropriate levels leads to attainment in Years 7 to 9 that is well above national levels of expectation. Achievement in Years 7 to 9 is therefore very good. Pupils with SEN achieve as well as classmates. Attainment at the end of Year 11, as reflected in lessons and work seen during inspection, is well above national expectations. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good, with no perceptible difference in achievement between girls and boys.

116. From Year 7 to Year 9, teaching is highly effective because of the high expectations and challenges set, and the use of short-term assessment to help pupils learn. Effective learning and high achievement in Years 7 and 8 stem from the excellent work of specially trained subject teachers working in their own departments. Very good specialist ICT teaching continues in Year 9, with teachers showing high expectations of their pupils to produce very good learning and high achievement. For example, pupils are competent at constructing web sites of varying complexities. In Years 10 and 11, teaching of GCSE Applied ICT is very good. Pupils enjoy this new Vocational Course, which produces a good level of learning. Pupils are very well motivated, for example when they use information from local firms to construct cash flow graphs and use databases in stock control. Information and communication technology (ICT) taught through subjects ensures that those pupils not taking the optional GCSE course have enough opportunity to develop their ICT skills well and show good achievement. In all years, pupils show good gains in independent learning. Assessment is carried out very well, with the result that it influences planning and support very quickly, and pupils understand how to make improvement. Very good technician support enhances teaching and maintains complex ICT resources effectively.

117. The leadership and management of a very large team are excellent, with a clear vision and excellent sense of purpose. A very high standard of formal monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is carried out regularly. Excellent improvement in the quality of provision has taken place since the last inspection.

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

118. Teaching of ICT is carried out across all subjects of the curriculum, and in turn the level of competence of pupils in Years 7 to 9 is very good. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 show a good level of competence as they apply skills in new situations. Overall, pupils' competence in ICT is very good. Most subjects make good use of ICT in teaching and learning, for example by means of data projectors and white boards (a small number of which are interactive). In mathematics, for instance, the use of both projector and interactive board effectively enhances the teaching of

modelling. English teachers use ICT as a stimulus to increase levels of learning, and pupils use mini-white boards to good effect. Pupils use desktop publishing software and illustrate work with clipart to enhance foreign language learning. Pupils enjoy good access to the Internet, and very good safeguards are in force against access to unsuitable sites.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

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

- Examination performance is above the national average.
- Teachers' subject knowledge and expertise extend learning.
- Development planning is limited in scope and does not indicate how new developments in teaching and learning are to be used to raise attainment.
- Assessment is not sufficiently used to support planning for learning by pupils of all abilities, and to ensure they know what they have to do to improve.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) has limited use as a learning aid.

#### **Commentary**

119. Standards in the 2003 assessments at the end of Year 9 were above the national expectation. In GCSE, standards were above the national average, but A\* to C grades in 2003 were slightly down on those of 2002. Given pupils' high prior attainment, the decline in A and A\* grades appears to represent some underachievement. Overall, girls perform slightly better than boys.

120. The work seen in Years 7 to 9 indicates good coverage of aspects of geography, with a wide range of writing in context but with little evidence of quantitative work or the use of ICT. Surprisingly, too much is incomplete, with diagrams unlabelled, which limits understanding and revision for examinations. Marking is inconsistent, with too little constructive feedback on how to improve. In Years 10 and 11 the best work shows evidence of comprehensive note taking, explanation and example, which supports preparation for GCSE. Fieldwork is good.

121. Overall, both teaching and learning are satisfactory, with some good lessons. Teachers are well qualified, experienced practitioners whose outstanding subject knowledge supplements key points in lessons. However, their style is often restricted to a didactic and knowledge-imparting format for too long. It is well intentioned but lacks the dynamism needed to push all pupils on at the best pace. Achievement by most pupils is satisfactory, but those with special educational needs and the higher attaining pupils are not achieving as well as they should. Opportunities available through the National Strategy for improving teaching in Years 7 to 9 have not been taken up. Objectives for a lesson are not indicated clearly enough to let pupils know the purpose of the lesson. Planning for learning, and modifying it in the light of assessment results, does not have the emphasis needed to raise attainment further. Behaviour in lessons and the attitude of the pupils, especially in Years 10 and 11, are very good. Fieldwork has a long, valued tradition which continues, though in a more local context.

122. The department is at a crossroads in its evolution. Whilst there are enough good points to make leadership and management satisfactory, not least the overall results, it is not as sharp as it can or needs to be. For example, the management of the department is largely by informal discussion. This does not co-ordinate well enough the work of the staff team, all of whom either have another role or are part-time geography teachers. The monitoring of classroom practice is underdeveloped. The development plan lacks detail and is not facing the challenge of the fact that

teaching and learning strategies have moved on rapidly in recent years. The department uses only a limited amount of information technology for handling and presenting data. Improvement since the last inspection is mixed. Results have risen. General resources are better, but the department can capitalise upon its strengths to tackle the issues above.

## History

Provision in history is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Standards are above average in Years 9 and 11.
- Teaching is good overall.
- Good relationships and pupils' attitudes ensure high work rates and learning.
- The use of assessment does not support individual pupils well enough for them to raise their standards higher.

## Commentary

123. Pupils in 2003 taking GCSE examinations attained above the national average. This is part of a trend over the past years, with girls attaining well above average A\* to C grades compared with boys, whose results were a little below average. Information about teachers' assessments at Year 9 is not available.

124. Pupils join the school with levels above normal, and raise their standards higher by dint of hard work. Levels for pupils currently in Year 9 are just above the national expectation for this age. Achievement by the end of Year 9 is satisfactory. Pupils identify evidence and can, when given the opportunity, distinguish between primary and secondary sources. They make good progress, for example in their knowledge of how the agricultural and industrial revolutions came about. By the end of Year 11 they use evidence more confidently, and all pupils use sources to obtain information. Their standards are above those expected for a GCSE course. Overall achievement by the end of Year 11 is satisfactory. Pupils of all abilities make good progress, including those with SEN.

125. Higher attaining pupils recall and relate facts to draw good conclusions. Although these pupils have opportunities to extend their knowledge, understanding and skills, these are limited in scale. Currently, there is little difference between the attainment or achievement of boys and girls. Good literacy and numeracy development is supported at basic levels, although the use and development of ICT skills are more limited.

126. Teaching overall is good. It is never less than satisfactory, and a few lessons are very good. Teaching is better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. In the better lessons, brisk question and answer sessions extend knowledge and understanding, and assess what is being learned. Pupils become engaged and interested by challenging situations. They express opinions and join in effective discussions that are fostered by good relationships between teacher and pupil. In a few lessons, pupils are insufficiently extended or stimulated to attain higher standards. Too often, however, assessment is not used to support individual pupils. This in turn leaves them unaware of how to raise their levels in class or written work.

127. Leadership and management are satisfactory. Though records of pupils' attainments are kept, they are not used sufficiently to track and support the progress of individual pupils, or to help lesson planning to raise standards further. The teaching team works closely together but does not regularly share effective practice. Development is limited because the department does not monitor its teaching or evaluate its own work well enough to know what it should do to improve. Overall, the quality of provision in history has been sustained since the last inspection.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **excellent**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Lessons are excellently planned and taught and challenge pupils to think a lot.
- Group work is innovative and the activities help pupils to achieve very high standards.
- Teachers monitor very thoroughly the progress of all pupils to ensure they do their best.
- Leadership is inspirational and teachers work very well together as a team.
- There is a strong and appropriate focus on examination skills in Years 10 and 11.
- Good quality homework is regularly set, completed and marked.

### Commentary

128. At the start of Year 7 pupils' attainment is average, but by the end of Year 9 they are well ahead of pupils elsewhere. This very good progress stems from the high achievement of both boys and girls, including those with SEN. Pupils respond with enthusiasm to group work, think issues out very well, and are able to summarise clearly what they feel. Work is always well presented and completed by pupils of all ability levels. Written work is excellent. In Years 10 to 11, pupils study science and religion, religion and sexuality, and the objectivity of religious experience to a greater depth than is usual at this age. The maturity of much of the debate and discussion that takes place in class is very impressive, reflecting pupils' very good achievement. In Years 10 and 11 a high proportion of pupils study the subject to GCSE Level, including some of limited ability. GCSE results show that both boys and girls attain well above national average.

129. The quality of teaching is very good, with a third of lessons being of a very high standard. Lesson aims are made clear at the outset, activities incorporate a high degree of challenge, and learning is checked effectively at the end. For example, in a Year 11 revision lesson on medical ethics, pupils worked to great effect, producing high quality examination answer frameworks. The teachers' review showed how much learning had taken place, as well as demonstrating the maturity of the young people involved. Teachers indicate on all work the levels pupils are achieving. Regular assessment promotes very good achievement by ensuring that pupils work to at least the standard expected of them. GCSE pupils all have individual targets and are strongly supported towards achieving them. Homework is set, completed and marked regularly, with supportive comments which contribute significantly to pupils' learning. The curriculum is adequately resourced, constantly under review and brought up to date to ensure it meets the needs of the learners.

130. Religious studies is exceptionally well led and managed, and the well-qualified team of teachers work together extremely well. Improvements to curriculum development and assessment, high achievement, and sustained above average attainment all represent very good progress in the quality of provision since the previous inspection.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

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

#### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Standards of work are well above national averages at GCSE.
- A committed team of staff provide consistently good teaching in all aspects of the subject.
- Pupils are keen, interested and have a strong desire to extend their knowledge and understanding.
- Limited resources restrict teaching methods, and access and use of ICT are inadequate to enhance the quality of all design work.
- Risk assessments in practical areas do not fully take account of existing hazards.

#### Commentary

131. Pupils' standards at the end of Year 9 are above national averages. This represents good achievement, because they enter the school with a wide skills base. Good literacy skills enable pupils to grasp technical knowledge, annotate design ideas and extend their technical understanding quickly. Pupils have an assured grasp of design principles, and are confident with freehand projection techniques, but their practice often lacks refinement. However, pupils' access to ICT is poor, and hinders their achievement. Over-large class sizes in practical areas constitute a hazard and depress the rate of achievement, particularly for the more talented pupils.

132. Standards in GCSE examinations in 2003 are well above national averages. All pupils, including those with SEN, achieve well. Boys' attainment is significantly higher than normal. They display a keen interest in the subject, apply themselves completely and show an ability to work independently. Pupils successfully apply design principles and evaluate their final products. Their graphical skills are competent but internet-based research and computer aided design skills remain underdeveloped. Manufacturing is skilful and accurate, with good attention to finishing the product.

133. The overall quality of teaching is good, with no unsatisfactory lessons, but it does not exploit the national strategy for improvement. Lesson management is characterised by very good relationships underpinned by clear expectations. Tasks are well matched to pupils' ability, although they are prescriptive when class size exceeds recommended safe limits. Lesson activities are well organised, but lesson planning does not take account of the learning needs of different ability groups. Marking is consistent but does not reinforce improving attainment levels sufficiently for individual pupils. Technical support is barely adequate, particularly in food technology. Inflexible timetabling gives an unequal allocation of lesson time between Years 10 and 11 and prevents accreditation of Vocational Courses in food hygiene.

134. Leadership from the acting subject head is satisfactory. Day-to-day management is good, despite ongoing staffing difficulties, and effective teamwork consolidates learning goals. However, development planning does not include a robust analysis of teaching organisation and performance. Risk assessments are too general, and require adaptation for each working area. Action is needed to improve machine dust extraction and cleaning, and to avoid teaching groups in Years 7 to 9 rising above the recommended size for workshops. Improvement in the quality of provision is satisfactory since the last inspection, with very good progress in raising GCSE performance.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

135. Music was the focus of the inspection. Although art and design and drama were not inspected in detail, a selection of lessons was observed and pupils' work sampled.

### **Art and design**

136. Highly skilled and committed teaching leads to a correspondingly high level of achievement in an appropriately wide range of work. Activities are imaginative and challenging. These engage pupils' enthusiasm and develop their skills and understanding in an outstanding way. A large number of pupils follow examination courses, and some of the work produced is of exceptional quality.

137. Resources and accommodation are effectively used. Preparation and support for teaching now benefit from the services of a technician.

138. Leadership in the subject shows enthusiasm, vision and flair, and these qualities are driving a department which is a strength of the school. Its work is widely displayed and is contributing to the rich visual environment of the school.

### **Drama**

139. Each pupil in Years 7 to 9 has a weekly lesson, and in 2003 drama was introduced as a GCSE option in Year 10. Pupils are very enthusiastic about the subject, and it makes a good contribution to their personal development. In an excellent lesson seen, pupils learned exceptionally well because the teacher's very successful time management and his specialist subject knowledge enabled him to set high expectations and challenge pupils effectively. The subject management is well supported by policy documents which are explicit and purposeful.

### **Music**

Provision in music is **good**.

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

- Excellent pupil-teacher relationships help foster positive attitudes towards the subject.
- Outstanding features include an extensive range of opportunities for musical enrichment outside the classroom.
- The department has good resources for music technology.
- Achievement in lessons is inconsistent in Years 7 to 9.
- Too few students learn musical instruments.

### **Commentary**

140. Teachers' assessments for Year 9 pupils in 2003 indicate standards which were above national expectations. The quality of work seen during the inspection suggests that this judgement is rather inflated. Although some work is better than average, it is by a lesser margin. This still represents good achievement. GCSE results for 2003 are in line with the national average, though in the recent past they have been better than this. The standard of work seen in the current Year 10 and 11 groups is variable but achievement is satisfactory. Overall, achievement is good.

141. All pupils have access to the music curriculum. Boys and girls respond equally well overall, though girls do achieve marginally better in the first three years. Work has a strong, practical focus and pupils acquire skills on the keyboard and in playing tuned percussion instruments. They create simple musical structures which provide them with opportunities to be inventive. In this context they



acquire an understanding of key vocabulary and are introduced to musical notation. However, this element carries too little consolidation and progression. The resources for music technology are good and pupils are gaining confidence in their use, though as yet, work in Years 7 and 8 is evolving.

142. The standard of teaching is good overall. Pupil-teacher relationships are positive and contribute to motivation and achievement. Behaviour is very good. Most pupils enjoy their work and respond well to the care and commitment shown to them. Some particularly good teaching in Year 7 is building up a secure base of knowledge and experience for later work. The most effective teaching shows a clear sense of direction and good pace. Where lessons are less successful, it is because objectives and procedures are not clear enough. A more careful structuring of lessons and effective use of time would allow for a greater variety of work in some instances. More secure judgements are needed on the levels of pupils' attainment during each of Years 7 to 9. Accommodation and resources are generally good.

143. Leadership and management of the department are positive and committed, and responsible for the maintenance and ongoing development of a strong and influential tradition. A wide range of music making outside the classroom makes an outstanding contribution to the corporate life of the school and extends well into the wider community. Pupils have a high level of involvement in the many choral and instrumental ensembles, and these perform at a high standard. Choral work is a particular strength, Choirs and ensembles participate with great success in local music festivals. Their performance is highly acclaimed and does much to raise the public profile of the school. Instrumental lessons are having a beneficial impact, though at present the amount available is below average. Satisfactory improvement since the last inspection includes development work in ICT and an expansion of opportunities for musical enrichment. Overall, music is a successful and flourishing department, brought about by a strong partnership of staff and pupils.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

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

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

- Standards and achievement in GCSE physical education are very high.
- The leadership and management of the subject are excellent.
- There are very good relationships between teachers and pupils.
- Pupils are very interested in the subject, and work hard in lessons.
- Pupils have very good opportunities to take part in extra-curricular sport, and standards are very high.
- Teachers do not use National Curriculum Levels of attainment in Years 7 to 9 to help pupils understand how they can improve.

### **Commentary**

144. Teachers' assessment of Year 9 pupils' work in 2003 indicates that standards were well above those seen in most schools nationally. GCSE results in 2003 were very high, with 90 per cent of pupils gaining A\* to C grades. This is very good achievement, with boys achieving slightly better than girls.

145. Pupils are achieving well in the subject, as they build on basic skills learned in primary school to reach high standards by Year 9 and Year 11. Standards of work seen during the inspection were above those seen nationally, although not in all activities. In Year 9 standards in netball are high, where pupils have a good understanding of team play, and good skills which they use effectively. Rugby standards are very high in Year 9, where pupils have a good understanding of the rules. They have good passing and receiving skills, and good individual skills in rucks and

mauls, which allow them to retain possession in these phases of the game. In Years 10 and 11 core physical education, standards are above expected levels in team games and average in badminton. Standards are high in GCSE, where, in addition to physical skills, pupils have a good understanding of body systems and different types of training.

146. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers know the subject well, and the good explanations and demonstrations they give lead to good learning. Lessons are well planned and are prepared with challenging tasks and high expectations of pupils. Pupils respond well to teachers and make good progress due to their commitment and positive attitudes. This contributes to their high achievement. Good use of ICT in teaching GCSE theory, with well-selected images, helps pupils develop an understanding of different types of fitness. In turn, pupils often show independence by taking responsibility for their own warm-up at the start of lessons.

147. Extra-curricular sport is of the highest standard, and team practices are open to pupils of all abilities. Gifted and talented pupils have many opportunities to play at higher levels in school matches, and many pupils represent the district and county in sporting activities. There are real strengths in the major team games of rugby, soccer, netball, hockey, athletics and cricket, and particularly good development in girls' football. The department is strengthening links with local primary schools through the Sports co-ordinator scheme.

148. Leadership and management of the subject are excellent. The committed team of teachers in the department, and others who help with school teams, are dedicated to raising standards and providing excellent opportunities for pupils in physical education. GCSE was recently introduced, and standards attained by pupils in Year 11 in the last two years have been exceptionally high, reflecting the very good progress made since the last inspection.

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

149. The school ethos of community and belonging is outstanding in the way it encourages a climate for learning in which all pupils grow and flourish. A comprehensive taught programme successfully promotes PSHE and development, and is very well complemented by citizenship lessons and activities throughout the curriculum. Although facilities limit assembly to parts of the school each day, and hence restrict a daily act of collective worship for all, pupils' spiritual development is well supported through encouragement to explore values and beliefs, and to think about their own priorities and ideals. In the majority of classes, pupils' questions are valued. They have the opportunity to reflect on what they learn, for example in religious education. The school makes extensive use of the surrounding area to promote a deep appreciation of nature. Pupils accept and very largely follow the school's clear moral codes. Teachers model fairness, integrity and respect for pupils, and this is substantially reciprocated. The school very successfully promotes co-operative working and a strong sense of belonging and representation. In turn, pupils willingly participate in a wide range of sports teams, and in cultural activities such as widely acclaimed theatre presentations, and music and choral festivals. Pupils' appreciation of culture benefits from the excellent opportunities in art and music, and in the excellent displays of work around the school.

## Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Much hard work is dedicated to providing a meaningful course which, as far as possible, conforms to the National Curriculum requirement and effectively promotes the personal and social development of pupils.
- Dedicated materials for each year group are researched and prepared so that all teachers know what to do in a lesson.
- Work is assessed very well, highlighting evidence of progression.
- Staffing changes and restricted funds to draw upon support agencies limit some aspects of the course.

### Commentary

150. High standards in written work are clearly apparent in the consolidation of the themes pupils study. Their participation in discussion and their willingness to contribute and engage are very good. Work is recorded and correctly graded according to the National Curriculum Levels. Pupils attain above the national expectation in Years 7 to 9, and also in Years 10 and 11, where citizenship is taught as part of a general studies carousel. Their achievement is very good and reflects a maturity in thought and attitude, which is displayed in the handling of often contentious, sensitive and sometimes difficult topics.

151. Teaching and learning are good overall, and never less than satisfactory, with some very good lessons. Teachers lead honest, open, full and frank discussions, and promote sensitive, adult discussion on sometimes contentious issues, including prejudice, sex education, healthy eating and option choices. Planning is exceptionally well developed. Objectives for lessons are made clear, and pupils see the value of the course and its topic coverage. Pupils participate fully, learn well and develop as informed citizens.

152. The strands of 'knowledge and understanding' about becoming 'informed citizens' and developing skills of 'enquiry and communication' are more highly developed than those of 'participation and responsible actions'. The carousel system in Years 10 and 11 can reduce effectiveness if a class or student has to miss a lesson in the sequence. Plans are in place to pursue accreditation at the end of Year 11, either through a short course GCSE or through the Entry Level Certificate in Preparation for Working Life.

153. Leadership and management are both very good, and a tribute to the research, skill, effort and dedication of the co-ordinator. The ability to get the messages across comes *via* meticulous planning, including useful Websites, clearly stated objectives, and the suggested methodology for the topics in each year group. Assessment arrangements are still at an early stage, but follow the National Curriculum descriptors for levels in Years 7 to 9. The need to further refine assessment and to ensure entitlement in Years 10 and 11 is understood. The process of developing the School Council by growing it upwards from Year 7 has created an equal opportunities issue for pupils in Years 9 to 11, who complain that they have no voice.

154. Citizenship has been introduced since the previous inspection and now combines the programmes for personal, social, careers, health and sex education into a meaningful whole which is apparent to the pupils. This is very good.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

156. The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003. Data for AS examinations do not include results of students who continued their studies to take A2 examinations in Year 13.

<b>Level 3 GCE AS Level courses</b>							
Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English Language	3	Fewer than five candidates					
English Literature	5	100	85.9	40.0	19.1	42.0	30.2
Mathematics	5	80.0	61.9	20.0	17.1	32.0	22.1
Chemistry	6	83.3	72.7	0.0	13.9	21.7	24.1
Physics	8	87.5	68.6	12.5	14.4	23.8	22.7
Design and technology	3	Fewer than five candidates					
History	5	80.0	80.7	20.0	19.5	32.0	28.6
Religious studies	4	Fewer than five candidates					
Physical education	5	100.0	73.2	40.0	11.4	40.0	23.1
Business studies	3	Fewer than five candidates					

<b>Level 3 GCE A Level and VCE courses</b>							
Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
English language	21	100	99.4	28.6	36.3	81.0	80.9
English Literature	10	100	99.5	30.0	46.5	82.0	86.5
Mathematics	11	100	96.7	72.7	55.6	94.5	88.8
Chemistry	18	100	97.6	55.6	49.0	85.6	84.9
Physics	11	100	96.7	54.5	44.6	94.5	81.7
Design and technology	13	100	97.8	69.2	35.0	96.9	77.9
History	19	94.7	99.0	42.1	44.6	78.9	84.6
Religious studies	28	100	98.8	28.6	46.7	82.1	85.6
Physical education	11	100	98.0	36.4	30.9	87.3	75.2
Business studies (GCE)	20	100	98.7	45.0	36.8	85.0	80.1
Business studies (VCE)	11	100	88.6	38.1	20.6	79.0	60.1

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

157. The focus was on English language and literature, but one lesson was sampled in German and two in French. Conversations were held with the teachers and students in both languages.

### French

158. Teaching and learning in the Sixth Form are very good and the courses are very well planned and organised. A Level results in recent years have been consistently above average. The Sixth Form groups in French are small, but students are highly motivated. They build very securely on the skills and knowledge they have acquired during their GCSE course. They make very good progress, since their work in Years 10 and 11 prepares them very well for advanced study. The confidence and rapidity with which students acquire new vocabulary or master the complexities of grammar indicate very good achievement. In a stimulating, challenging lesson about the effects of social exclusion on immigrant teenagers in France, students eagerly pooled ideas based on their independent reading of authentic French journalism. They dealt successfully with a discrete

grammar topic focusing on relative pronouns and adjectival clauses. Conversing in fluent French, students expressed their satisfaction with the course, their awareness of their attainment so far, and their confidence about gaining high grades in the imminent AS Level examination. They had gained much from their recent work experience in Lille.

## **German**

159. In AS and A Level courses in German, students gain a great deal from spirited discussion and intensive work in sizeable groups, as well as from their teachers' fluency and expertise. A Level results in recent years have, in consequence, been consistently higher than average.

160. Whilst most students are able, committed linguists who handle the work with flair, a minority have to be tenacious in their progression from GCSE standards to those required in advanced studies. All students benefit from the carefully structured lessons and meticulous planning, and from the regular feedback that teachers give them about their work. They overtly enjoy, and are keen to contribute to, the imaginative lessons where grammar may be presented as a mock auction, or where a period of silent meditation illustrates differences in eastern and western philosophies. Lessons are taught with infectious style and enthusiasm which successfully complement the students' own motivation and maturity. Much of the work is directly linked to students' own preoccupations and experience, as in a lesson about the benefits and dangers of nuclear energy, so their spoken and written comments are usually from the heart.

161. Students develop and apply their language skills in work experience abroad and through enriching activities such as joining students from other schools to produce a newspaper in a day, using ICT.

## **English**

Provision in English is **good**.

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

- The quality of teaching is very good.
- Standards are high and achievement is very good.

## **Commentary**

162. A Level English language and English literature results have been well above average in the recent past. They declined to average in 2003, when three out of ten students gained grades A and B, and all of them gained pass grades A to E. This represents satisfactory achievement. Girls did much better than boys. No boys gained the higher grades, A or B, in English language. AS Level English literature results were well above average. Two out of five students gained grades A and B.

163. Standards in Year 13 are well above national expectations and achievement is very good. Most students' writing is consistently evaluative and analytical. Students have a detailed knowledge of the themes and narrative structure of texts. They evaluate the contemporary values that influence authors, and comment astutely on how interpretations of texts change over time. Most write accurately and persuasively. The written work of less highly attaining students shows some flaws in expression and accuracy, and their analysis of the author's use of language lacks detail. In Year 12, students make very good progress in developing analytical skills in lessons and are beginning to transfer these skills to their written work.

164. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers are very experienced and are well read in terms of both texts and critics. As a result, students make very good progress in improving their analytical skills and their argumentative writing. Challenge and high expectations are features in all lessons. Learning is highly interactive, with many opportunities for whole-class and group

discussion. Students are expected to work independently through researching contextual background and delivering presentations, as well as by taking notes and in written assignments. The variety of learning activities encourages and motivates students. Students of all abilities carry out their essay work with enthusiasm and enjoyment. Marking is very good. Teachers use written and spoken comments to clarify what each student needs to do to improve.

165. Leadership and management are good. The sharing of assessment objectives clarifies for students what they have to do improve to achieve their goals. In a Year 13 English literature lesson, for example, students were encouraged to consider how they might meet assessment objectives and gain higher grades. Teachers have very high aspirations for their students, and are very enthusiastic about language and literature. Improvement has been good since the last inspection.

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

166. Students' communication skills in writing and speaking are very high in all Sixth Form subjects. Their general expression is clear: they rarely lapse into inappropriate colloquialism. Research skills are also well above average.

167. Teachers provide very good support for students' communication skills. Many subjects expect students to give presentations. Students write well to communicate information, ideas and opinions to intended audiences.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

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

- Leadership is very good and has improved the popularity of the subject in the Sixth Form.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which supports very good teaching and well-structured development of new topics.
- Students' very good attitudes to mathematics support their development as independent learners.
- Assessment of students' work is thorough and promotes better understanding of how well they are doing.
- Lessons are often teacher directed, limiting opportunities for students to take part in the development of new ideas.

168. Standards attained at A Level in 2003 were above the national average and were well above average at AS Level. This continues the rising trend in attainment and represents well above average achievement by most students. The small numbers make the comparison between boys' and girls' achievement unreliable, but boys achieved better than girls at A Level.

169. In the work seen, standards of attainment were in line with those expected in A Level courses nationally and show that students achieve well in lessons. The range of mathematical competence is wide, and some AS students find it difficult to select the appropriate method to apply when solving random variable distribution questions. Students' relationships in lessons are very good. They support one another well and are becoming confident in taking responsibility for their own learning. When lessons are too teacher-directed, students become passive learners, which reduces the impact of otherwise good teaching. They make their own notes in lessons, but these notes are not sufficiently well organised to serve as good revision tools. Students' work is of a very high quality, with mathematically rigorous solutions.

170. Teachers' very good subject knowledge and experience provide lessons that are insightful and well structured. This enables good learning by students and provides solid foundations for further progress. The development of the use of ICT as a teaching and learning tool is enriching the

quality of learning opportunities. Teachers know their students well and provide appropriate challenge and pace in lessons. Marking of students' work is thorough and analytical. Feedback from teachers provides students with good information about how to improve. Students are well supported during individual work and teachers take care to ensure that they understand what they are learning, by frequent reference to real-life applications of principles.

171. The teacher responsible for Sixth Form mathematics manages the subject well, and his leadership is very good. In conjunction with the head of department, he is developing provision for students' learning and raising the profile of the subject within the school. Students are assessed regularly and their progress tracked against their predicted grades. Opportunities are provided for students to improve their results where appropriate.

172. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good, especially since the appointment of the teacher in charge of Sixth Form mathematics.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

173. Students' mathematical skills support their learning well. Students of mathematics are confident in using their skills in other subject areas. There is good use of statistical analyses in most A Level subjects. In physics, students use their mathematics well but little is done to enhance this ability. A Level physical education students make use of their data-gathering and graphical presentation skills during their applied physiology studies. Students' specific mathematical development is a focus of the general studies course. Good use of statistical analysis was evident when the students were studying law and order, but in a general studies lesson, dedicated to improving their mathematics skills, students were very insecure in demonstrating their mathematical understanding.

### **SCIENCE**

174. The focus was on chemistry and physics, but lessons in biology and public understanding of science were also sampled.

175. In a good Year 12 lesson on public understanding of science, the teacher used high quality resource material on the dangers of environmental radiation to develop skills in discussion, decision making, and presentation. Students learned well, gaining a good understanding of how the principles of epidemiology can be used to assess risk factors in different contexts. Standards of attainment are broadly as expected. Students debated the issues sensibly, and with a high level of respect for the views of others. Just a few students, however, were better speakers than listeners, and tended to interrupt their colleagues to push a point of view. The course is popular and makes a good contribution to the curriculum, in keeping with the school's Science College status.

176. A very well taught Year 13 biology lesson led to students making very good progress and achievement in developing study skills for handling synoptic examination questions. Students capably related previous learning to draw different aspects of the subject together. They were very effectively aided by constant support and by pointers towards key information from the teacher when a sufficiently sharp focus upon the thrust of the question eluded them.

## **CHEMISTRY**

Provision in chemistry is **good**.

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

- Students work hard to reach, and often surpass, their predicted grades: achievement is good overall.
- Students' attitudes to the subject are excellent. They have a responsible approach to their subject, and learn well as a result.
- Although teaching is very good overall, more could still be done to help students to improve their ability to interpret and evaluate results, and to report them in precise scientific English.
- There is insufficient use of computers in day-to-day laboratory work.

### **Commentary**

177. Students come into the Sixth Form with levels of attainment that are generally above average. They learn well, and their results in A Level examinations have been above or well above average for several years. There is a consistent pattern of students reaching or surpassing their predicted grades, based on their GCSE results in Year 11. Most students continue on to A Level at the end of Year 12, and statistical comparisons in relation to AS are not possible.

178. Students are attentive and participate very well in lessons, because most teaching is lively and stimulating and holds their interest. They keep accurate notes of what they have learned and use them well to revise for examinations. Good discussions and well-led question and answer sessions help them to make rapid gains in understanding. Practical work reinforces their learning well and brings the subject to life. All these features contribute to good achievement. In their written work, however, there is evidence that students could do better still. Their answers to practice examination questions are well focused and show that they can cope well with routine problem-solving activities. However, they lack opportunities to think critically about what they have learned, to evaluate chemical ideas, to formulate their own opinions, and to express them in continuous prose. The questions they answer are not linked closely enough to students' individual needs.

179. Teaching is very good overall, and leads to very good learning. Lively questioning, often with a wry sense of humour, captures students' attention so that they are instantly engaged throughout the lesson, even when the topic is a routine one such as the naming of organic compounds. Teachers develop new ideas, such as those surrounding equilibria, using their secure subject knowledge to answer questions well. They take every opportunity to reinforce understanding by using familiar examples. They often use practical work to emphasise the experimental nature of the subject, devising simple tasks which illustrate ideas very clearly. However, inadequate computer facilities in laboratories limit both the range of investigative work that can be undertaken and the opportunities to use computers for processing and presenting results. Assessment of students' work is generally good and is firmly rooted in national standards. However, not enough use is made of the results of assessment to set short-term targets and monitor progress towards them.

180. Management of the department is satisfactory. The newly appointed head of department deals with day-to-day administration well, and good policies are presented in the departmental handbook. The course is well planned to give a logical and developing view of the subject. As yet, however, insufficient use is made of directed questioning, well-chosen writing tasks, and open-ended problem-solving exercises, to challenge each student's learning at the highest level.

181. Since the last inspection, the number of students choosing to study chemistry has increased and high standards have been maintained. Overall, the high quality of provision has been sustained.

## **Physics**



Provision in physics is **good**.

**Main strengths and weaknesses:**

- Teaching is very good overall, and this leads to good learning.
- Students' attitudes to the subject are very good, and they show interest and enthusiasm for their work.
- The department is well led and managed.
- Access to computers in laboratories is limited, and this puts constraints on the curriculum.
- Written work and marking do not do as much as they could to improve students' learning.

**Commentary**

182. In examinations in physics, students consistently gain results that are well above average at both AS and A Level. In lessons, they engage in lively discussions, for example about nuclear physics, and show by their contributions that, for the most part, they understand the work well. The quality of their practical work is more variable, however, and some students struggle to translate the well-ordered work they have in their notebooks or textbooks into real experimental arrangements. Such difficulties occasionally obscure the real purpose of the task being undertaken. Achievement is good, both in lessons and in relation to students' attainment in GCSE examinations.

183. Teaching is very good overall. Teachers' subject knowledge is excellent and this helps them to respond to questions from their students, and to lead lively and productive discussions. In lessons on the origin of the universe, for example, the teacher was able to bring the subject alive by communicating to his students the excitement of working with ideas which are quite outside our everyday experience, whilst relating them to our understanding of the world in which we live. Excellent use of the resources available to the department makes a real contribution to the quality of learning and to the promotion of skills which students use much more widely. In one very good lesson, for example, the teacher introduced the topic briefly before moving the class to a computer room where they carried out research on the internet to excellent effect. Classroom management and the excellent relationships between teachers and their students are major strengths of the department.

184. Practical skills are good overall, but lower attaining students sometimes have difficulty in translating between experimental arrangements and their theoretical understanding. In a lesson on internal resistance of cells, for example, students nearly all understood that a high resistance voltmeter is used to measure the emf of a cell, and that if you draw a current from a cell the measured voltage falls. But only the highest attaining students could relate these observations to their experiences of batteries which become less effective as they are used. And in another class in which students were using oscilloscopes to calibrate a signal generator, they found it difficult to overcome the technical aspects of using the oscilloscope. Their understanding of the purpose of the experiment suffered as a result.

185. The newly appointed head of science, who is also head of physics, leads his department well. He has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in his department, and a clear vision of how he can work with his colleagues to raise attainment and improve achievement. He manages the resources available to him very well, but the lack of computer facilities within the science department restricts his freedom to plan lessons for maximum effect.

186. Since the last inspection, high standards have been maintained and the department has moved forward in keeping with the school's Science College status. The number of students choosing to study physics in the Sixth Form has increased. Overall improvement has been good.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

187. There is no subject teaching of ICT in the Sixth Form. However, a drop-in facility for applying basic operations is offered to students in general studies time, during which teachers help students to use the facilities available for assignments in other subjects.

188. Students put the facility to very good use when completing university application forms (UCAS). There are currently no computers dedicated exclusively for Sixth Form use. However, permission may be granted for them to enter other ICT lessons where there are idle computers, or to use one of the computers in the school library. Students can also gain access to the school network from home. The school is aware of the problem and there are plans to equip an additional room with computers for Sixth Form use.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **History**

Provision in history is **good**.

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

- Standards in AS and A Level examinations are above average.
- Very good, challenging teaching leads to very good learning.
- Relationships between teachers and students are good.
- Students have positive attitudes to their work.

### **Commentary**

189. Standards in AS and A Level examinations in 2003 were above average, though lower than in previous years, reflecting lower GCSE grades on entry to the Sixth Form in 2001. The number of students who gained the higher grades, A and B, was also above average, though lower than in previous years. Since the last inspection, standards at AS and A Level have been above the national average and above the average for similar schools. Achievement overall is good.

190. Standards seen in the classroom and in students' folders during the inspection reflect this high attainment. Students take the greater demands of Sixth Form work in their stride, and revel in their newfound ability to take their learning further. In Year 12, they quickly rise to the challenge and work very hard, not only to write effectively, but also to engage in high quality discussion which is enhanced by the good relationships between teacher and student. They benefit from the close analysis they give to detailed topics, such as the work on the relationship between the Liberal and Labour parties in the early twentieth century. Dialogue with their teachers and fellow students stimulates a thirst for knowledge and an awareness of the world around us. Students argue cogently about the difficult topics found in the course on totalitarian ideologies, as well as evaluating the changes in the British political parties in the early years of the twentieth century. In a lesson on the ideologies in Italy and Germany, for example, many pupils grasped that the roots of the philosophy could be traced back to earlier times, and discussed complex points decisively. In Year 13, they write longer essays with confidence in preparation for a dissertation on Germany, showing increasing maturity of thought and the ability to synthesise a discussion well. They use the wide range of resources available to them well, for example the excellent library stock and Internet. Students develop their literacy skills and make ambitious attempts at using newly acquired vocabulary relevantly. Statistics are used to back up their arguments.

191. Teaching is nearly all good or very good in both year groups, and is good overall. Lessons are well prepared. Most lessons are related to examination questions, this being a useful tool for

analysis of the problems and situations presented. The use of simple text resources is backed up by stimulating and challenging tasks. Assessment of essays is careful and analytical, which raises students' aspirations. The good relationships help students to attempt hard topics without hesitation or trepidation, and with the confidence that they will be helped to improve their historical skills.

192. Leadership of history in the Sixth Form is good. The head of department and other teachers are good role models for young historians. Monitoring and assessment of students' progress is good, and high quality feedback helps to maintain high standards. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## Religious Studies

Provision in religious studies is **excellent**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Teaching is very good overall, and lessons stimulate and challenge students to do their best.
- Very effective and innovative activities help students to grasp difficult concepts.
- Very thorough analysis of students' abilities helps teachers to match the work closely to their needs.
- Excellent leadership, management, and teamwork generate an excellent atmosphere for learning, and very positive attitudes.
- The very well developed focus on examination techniques ensures that students achieve well.
- Regular homework is set and helpfully marked.

### Commentary

193. The AS religious studies course includes students of very high ability as well as those who just qualify for Advanced Level work. They study the Philosophy of Religion paper, and nearly all of them obtain higher grades than predicted on the basis of their GCSE work. A high proportion of them progress to A Level in Year 13, where they also gain very good results. This is very good achievement, which is also reflected by current students in their lesson and written work. In class, students show good levels of confidence in handling philosophical concepts and are able to quote thinkers such as Aquinas and Aristotle accurately. Students' files are extensive and very well maintained and show evidence of excellent learning. They include many exercises worked through in class to clarify thinking, excellent handouts that are usually well annotated, and a good number of well-written essays that are very thoroughly marked, with good advice to help students to improve.

194. By the end of Year 12, students make good use of technical language such as *ontological*, *primary precepts*, and *natural law*, and engage in good debate with other students and teachers on such topics as Natural Law and Abortion. By the end of Year 13 they are beginning to effectively integrate many of the areas studied and show very good recall and understanding of work completed earlier. Much of their written work in Year 13 is of a very high standard. Teachers keep very good records so they know how each student learns best and can adapt the work accordingly. Their support contributes further to very good achievement in Years 12 and 13.

195. Teaching is at least very good and often excellent. Teachers use a wide range of teaching strategies and resources to support learning, with a particular focus on what each student needs. Alongside a variety of teacher inputs and good opportunities for questions and discussion in every lesson, students often have individual or group exercises to carry out, or tasks to reinforce their learning. These activities include prioritising exercises, and statements which they have to match or identify with different thinkers or approaches to the subject. Lessons always end with a review to check that the aim of the lesson has been achieved. Alongside the subject coverage, teachers spend time ensuring that students know how best to present the information to obtain maximum marks in the examination, and how to make best use of their time.

196. All students have target grades to achieve and these are regularly discussed with them. Extra help is given for those who find the work hard or who miss lessons through no fault of their own. Marking always focuses on how to improve.

197. Leadership and management are excellent, and staff work very closely together to devise new approaches to teaching as well as in carrying out internal moderation. The standard of religious studies in the Sixth Form is much higher than at the last inspection; overall improvement has therefore been very good.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

### **Design and technology**

Provision in design and technology (product design) is **very good**.

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

- Standards are above average in both AS and A Level product design courses.
- Teaching is very good and reflects secure command of the subject.
- Students apply themselves well, work independently and respond positively to challenge.
- Computer aided design (CAD) and manufacture (CAM) are underdeveloped in all material areas.
- Access to ICT is unsatisfactory and is unconvincingly used to enhance quality of all work.
- Experience of modern and smart materials is narrow and limits growth of understanding.

198. A Level results in 2003 were well above average, with over two-thirds of students gaining the higher grades, A or B. This reflects consolidation of standards in the subject. National comparisons for AS in 2003 are difficult because of the small numbers entered. Achievement throughout the Sixth Form is good. Retention on A2 courses is very good.

199. Standards of work seen reflect 2003 examination results. During lessons, students work hard and effectively apply design principles to a range of challenging design briefs. Their technical knowledge and understanding of a range of processes and materials are good. Research is thoughtfully undertaken but is too dependent on commercial and catalogue materials. A good range of design ideas is generated, using competent sketching skills, but presentation varies in the quality of refinement and sophistication applied. Analytical thinking displays maturity; and social and ethical issues are thoughtfully scrutinised. Modelling is increasingly used to evaluate ideas and develop prototypes, but a modest range of materials and small machine tools restricts the quality and scope of model making. Students evaluate their work, but lack the confidence to complete on-going evaluation as realistic ideas are developed. Use of ICT is unsatisfactory because students do not have sufficient access to the range of software and hardware they need to improve the quality of their research, testing, and evaluation. Folio presentation requires that students are able to produce single A3 documents, using a range of ICT skills to copy and paste, if higher AS and A Level grades are to be consistently attained. Manufacturing standards are good, with good accuracy and close attention to finishing their products. Knowledge and understanding of industrial production techniques are narrow.

200. Students work independently and show much initiative; they help and support each other commendably. Lessons are characterised by excellent staff and student relationships. Every opportunity is given to students to express personal views and ideas; discussion of moral and ethical issues is impressive, although large class sizes now in Year 12 limit the degree of challenging debate and working practices.

201. The teaching is consistently very good. Lessons are thoughtfully structured and organised. Work is regularly assessed and students are given clear guidance on how to improve the quality of

their work. Sound teaching strategies are used but do not reflect the range of learning styles and needs that effectively promote creativity and innovation.

202. Leadership is sound, and management includes informed and competent planning. Staff are totally committed to raising standards. However, a relentless focus on raising achievement requires robust analysis of both student and staff performance, the assembly of a realistic development plan with challenging success criteria to develop quality learning environments, and a wider range of design activities. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory.

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

203. No subject in this curriculum area was the focus of the inspection, but lessons in art, media studies and music were sampled.

204. An excellent art lesson in which students were working on their examination projects was marked by a clear determination to reach the highest standards. Not only was the level of technical competence extremely high, but students were able to show in discussion that they have an excellent appreciation of cultural and creative influences on the ways that their work represents the real world without depicting it literally. The quality of the curriculum in the Sixth Form is excellent, and teachers give outstanding support to students as they seek to realise their vision. The programmes offered, supported by innovative developments, provide an interesting and engaging curriculum.

205. In a very good media studies lesson in Year 12, students analysed and discussed a radio programme as a group activity. Students prepared their own written analyses. The teacher set high expectations for the precise use of language and skilfully drew out learning points from the discussion. Students used technical language with assurance and accuracy.

206. The school's policy of open access to music in the Sixth Form shows an inclusive and flexible approach to work at this level. Of the six Year 12 students, three have not studied music for GCSE. Four of them are preparing for AS, and two for an alternative accredited theory examination.

207. Teaching is supportive and the approach is well matched to the needs of the students, whose knowledge related to structural analysis is developing well. The students enjoy their studies and are making good progress.

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

### **Physical education**

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

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

- Very good teaching leads to very good learning; achievement is very good.
- Students have very positive attitudes and value the subject.
- There are very good relationships between teachers and students.
- Leadership and management are excellent.
- There are high standards and very good opportunities in extra-curricular sport.

### **Commentary**

208. Standards in AS and A Level physical education in 2003 were well above average when compared with those of similar schools. Achievement was very good.

209. Standards of students' work seen in Years 12 and 13 are above expected levels. They have a good knowledge of the physiology of respiration, and understand muscle anatomy in more depth than for GCSE. They have some knowledge of the issues surrounding the Olympic Games, and are beginning to appreciate the bidding process for the Games. Students have good knowledge of psychology applied to sport. They understand how levels of arousal can have positive and negative effects on performance in different sporting activities. They make good use of the knowledge they have from GCSE, and extend this knowledge to the higher level needed in advanced courses.

210. The few students who have not taken a GCSE course make particularly good progress to meet the demands of the AS course. Students on AS and A2 courses achieve well as they learn about more advanced topics, such as the cultural influences on sport, social influences on performance and acquisition of sports skills.

211. Teaching and learning are very good overall, and some lessons are excellent. Teachers' excellent subject knowledge enables them to give in-depth explanations of the theory of physical education. Planning and preparation for lessons are very good, and work set provides very good challenge to students of all capabilities. Very good use of ICT in teaching, with very effective animations, video and computer presentations, leads to very good progress in students' learning of the theory of the subject. Students have excellent attitudes and relationships with their teachers. These excellent relationships make a major contribution to the quality of learning in lessons. Students' work is well marked, with clear indications of strengths and weaknesses and good advice on how to improve. Students value the subject, and many intend to use the qualification for entry on to more advanced courses such as sports science and physical education teaching.

212. Leadership and management are excellent. There is vision to achieve high standards, and in only three years since the introduction of the Advanced Level Courses these high standards are being achieved. There is good understanding of individual students' examination performances through the analysis of exam results. Students have the opportunity to take part in recreational games, as well as in school teams, where standards are very high. They also assist teachers in some physical education lessons. Progress has been very good since the last inspection, with the introduction of the advanced physical education courses.

## **BUSINESS**

213. Two distinct courses in business are available, one leading to a qualification at AS or A Level, and one leading to an AVCE, equivalent to two A Level passes. Both courses were inspected in detail and are reported upon below.

### **Business studies**

Provision in business studies is **very good**.

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

- Teaching is at least good, with some very good and excellent teaching. It is very good overall.
- Students' work is always very well planned to support very good learning.
- Teachers promote, by their example, high standards in both A Level and AVCE courses.
- Students' progress is very carefully monitored. Excellent one-to-one reviews enhance students' understanding of how they can improve.
- Excellent use is made of ICT on both courses.
- Exposure to real business situations is insufficiently developed.

### **Commentary**

214. Examination results in AS and A Level business studies were above national averages in 2002 and 2003. Students on the AVCE course consistently achieve at well above their estimated

grades. Work seen in class is well above average and students are articulate and literate, and they co-operate well.

215. Students enter the AS business studies course with a wide range of attainment in GCSE. Those on the AVCE course have below average GCSE grades on entry to the Sixth Form. By the end of Year 12, students on both courses gain above average grades that either meet or exceed their school targets. Work observed in class was excellent. Students are particularly good at using ICT to research and present their work. This is demonstrated in the excellent wall display on the European Community. Students maintain excellent files that are appropriately indexed.

216. Achievement overall in Year 12 is therefore very good. Nearly all Year 12 AS students choose to move on to A Level, where they gain above average grades. Achievement in Year 13 is good overall. There is no consistent difference in attainment between boys and girls, though more girls than boys choose to study these courses.

217. The quality of teaching is very good. Lessons are very well thought out and teachers manage time well. In a Year 12 AS Level class, for example, students had one lesson to prepare a case to present to a Planning Committee for and against building a factory on land opposite to the school. The class was divided into groups representing different interests, with one group representing the Planning Committee. In the next lesson all groups presented their cases very well, supported by good quality posters, and there was still time to have a very high standard of open debate. All this was managed with a class of 25 students who observed all the appropriate protocols of a planning enquiry. In AVCE lessons, teachers check regularly that learning is taking place and provide appropriate exercises to reinforce it. Teachers manage lesson time well, with a large number of short activities. This suits the needs of their students well, and leads to good understanding and learning. They use the time when students are working on their projects to carry out reviews with individual students.

218. Students undertake projects based on large companies, such as Windscale, but overall links with local businesses are underdeveloped. The department seeks to compensate for the lack of major companies locally by using the web sites of national companies and, to lesser extent, through computer simulations. However, not enough is done to familiarise young people with the real concerns of the smaller business units that exist in and around Keswick.

219. The leadership of the department is very good. The school has given realistic consideration to the ways in which the two courses on offer can best meet the needs of students, and to how both might develop over the next few years. Management of resources available to the department is very good and makes a significant contribution to the quality of students' learning. Monitoring of the work of the department is good, and the head of department uses her very good subject knowledge to create courses that meet the needs of all students very well. Teachers provide excellent role models for their students.

220. When account is taken of the continuing high levels of attainment and good achievement, progress since the last inspection has been good.

## **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

221. All students take a general course which covers key skills, careers, general studies, PSHE, and games. Careers, key skills, and games are compulsory in Year 12. Students are strongly encouraged to take the general studies examination at AS Level, and may continue to A Level if they wish. Those who take general studies in Year 13 take a course in religious studies which fulfils the statutory requirement for religious education in the Sixth Form.

222. Three areas of this course were sampled, covering numeracy, a lesson on crime and punishment statistics, and an introductory lesson with Year 12 on university entrance.

223. In the lesson on numeracy, students revised material which they had covered in the main school on basic arithmetic. Teaching which held students' interest and was firmly based on requirements of the general studies examination led to satisfactory learning, but showed considerable gaps in students' knowledge.

224. In an excellent lesson on crime and punishment with Year 13, a superb discussion on crime and our attitudes to punishment made excellent use of statistical information to show how an inadequate understanding of issues can lead to hasty and potentially damaging decisions in society. Students not only gained in their understanding of issues related to crime in this country, but also explored cultural issues and improved their ability to use statistics to substantiate an argument.

225. In another very good lesson, this time in Year 12, students worked in groups to identify factors which should influence their choices within higher education. In this lesson, too, they worked very well together with resource material to reach a corporate view within each group. In producing display material they not only focused their ideas but also learned how to address a problem systematically and rationally in their quest for an appropriate solution to it.



## PART D: SUMMARY OF MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENT

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

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