

INSPECTION REPORT

KING EDWARD VI ASTON SCHOOL

Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103555

Headteacher: Mr P A Christopher

Lead inspector: Mr R Palmer

Dates of inspection: 9th – 13th February 2004

Inspection number: 264327

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Grammar
School category:	Foundation
Age range of pupils:	11 – 18
Gender of pupils:	Boys
Number on roll:	742
School address:	Frederick Road Aston Birmingham
Postcode:	B6 6DJ
Telephone number:	0121 327 1130
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr B Shale
Date of previous inspection:	23 rd November 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

King Edward VI Aston School is a selective, voluntary aided grammar school for boys aged 11-18. It is one of the five selective schools that comprise the King Edward VI Foundation in Birmingham. It is smaller than most other secondary schools and has 742 boys on roll. The school is vastly oversubscribed and selects its pupils from more than 70 primary schools in the Birmingham and West Midlands area. It has recently obtained status as a specialist sports college. Boys' attainment on entry to the college in Year 7 is high. Pupils come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds, including about a quarter from disadvantaged circumstances. The school is part of the local authority's 'Excellence in Cities' scheme. About half of the boys come from a wide range of minority ethnic backgrounds. Most of these are of Asian heritage. The proportion of boys whose mother tongue is other than English, nearly a third, is high. No boys are at a very early stage of learning English. No pupils have statements of special educational needs. The small number of boys with special educational needs such as dyslexia, dyspraxia or behavioural difficulties integrate fully into classes.

The sixth form is growing steadily and, with 217 male students, is of above average size. Virtually all of the boys stay on from Year 11 and continue until the end of Year 13. About 20 students join the sixth form each year from other local schools. The backgrounds of students in Years 12 and 13 match those of students in Years 7 to 11. On entry to Year 12, students' attainment is well above average on the courses studied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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12118	A Paver	Team inspector	Religious education Citizenship
29351	L Pearson	Team inspector	Music
31879	D Rhodes	Team inspector	Mathematics
19404	L Schubeler	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an **excellent** school, which provides **very good** value for money. It has an extremely positive and purposeful ethos. Standards are very high when compared with national averages. Achievement in mathematics is particularly high. GCSE results are well above average by Year 11, when compared with other selective grammar schools. Achievement is very good throughout Years 7 to 13. The school provides a very good quality of education for boys of all ethnicities. Racial harmony is excellent. The quality of teaching is very good throughout. The quality of leadership and management is very good overall.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- GCSE results are well above average for grammar schools and show very good achievement.
- Very good teaching and very effective use of assessment promote high standards.
- Excellent enrichment activities enhance boys' academic and all-round development.
- Excellent leadership by the headteacher and governing body has resulted in very good improvements since the previous inspection.
- Excellent attitudes and behaviour ensure an outstanding ethos and excellent racial harmony.
- AS/Advanced Level (A2) results and achievement in chemistry are lower than other subjects in Years 12 and 13.
- Deficiencies in accommodation in art and design and in design and technology hinder learning.
- There is little planned teaching of higher-order literacy skills across the curriculum.
- Teaching of citizenship, though satisfactory, is inconsistent across subjects.

The school has made **very good** improvement since its previous inspection in 1998. Standards are even higher now. It has sustained and built upon previous strengths such as teaching and leadership and management. Recently acquired status as a specialist sports college has enabled the school to make substantial and positive developments in its links with the local community. The two areas that previously needed improvement, namely provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and the library, are now both very good. The school has the capacity and the commitment to continue to make improvements.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Achievement is **very good** overall for boys of all ethnic backgrounds. Standards overall are very high and in the top five per cent of all schools nationally by the end of Years 9 and 11. Compared with the results of grammar schools, in 2003, results in the Year 9 national tests were above average and GCSE results were well above average. They indicated good achievement in the national tests and very good GCSE achievement. Even though GCSE results are consistently very high, they are improving at a faster rate than the national improvement. Results at grades A*/A show particularly good improvement. Standards in Years 7 to 11 are currently very high in English, science and mathematics. They represent achievement by Year 11 that is very good in English and science and excellent in mathematics. Achievement is currently very good in most subjects and is

satisfactory in citizenship in Years 7 to 11. In the sixth form, standards are very high and indicate very good achievement overall. Achievement is satisfactory in chemistry.

Provision for boys' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **excellent**. Boys have exemplary attitudes to work and school. Behaviour is excellent. Attendance is very high.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

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

Teaching and learning are very good throughout Years 7 to 13. The use of assessment and marking to set challenging targets and to help boys to improve their work is very good. Teaching is very good in the large majority of subjects. It is excellent in mathematics and is satisfactory in citizenship and in sixth form chemistry. Teachers make very effective use of their subject expertise to challenge students to work and think hard. Students are very keen to learn. They work at pace and very productively in class and support their learning through conscientious completion of homework. Very good discipline and effective management of classes ensure a very good climate for learning.

The very good curriculum, enriched by an excellent programme of extra-curricular activities, provides a very wide variety of challenging and interesting activities to meet the needs of all boys. The quality of care is good overall. Guidance and support are very good for boys of all ethnic backgrounds. Excellent links with the community enhance boys' learning and personal development. Links with parents and with other schools are very good. The accommodation for design and technology and for art and design is inadequate and restricts the range of learning activities.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good overall. Governance is excellent. The school meets statutory requirements. The excellent leadership of the headteacher sets a very clear direction for further improvement and has led to continued improvements in recent years. Senior managers share a strong commitment to raise achievement further. Financial management is very good.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and boys are very pleased with the school's high standards. They appreciate, particularly, the high expectations and excellent opportunities for boys' all-round development.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- raise achievement in citizenship and in sixth form chemistry;
- improve the accommodation for design and technology and for art and design;
- improve further boys' higher-order literacy and oracy skills in all years.

THE SIXTH FORM AT KING EDWARD VI ASTON SCHOOL

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form is **very good**. It is cost effective. Standards are high in Years 12 and 13. They indicate very good achievement for students of all ethnic backgrounds. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Numbers are rising and retention of students on courses is very good. Overall, results in AS/A2 examinations are consistently high and represent very good achievement. Very good teaching and very effective leadership and management help students to achieve very well on current courses and make excellent provision for the all-round development of students.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- AS and A2 results are high and represent very good achievement.
- Provision for students' personal and all-round development is excellent.
- Achievement in chemistry is not as good as in other subjects.
- Students' exemplary behaviour and attitudes assist their achievement.
- Very good leadership and management have a strong focus on raising standards further.
- Very good teaching and very effective use of assessment help students to achieve very well.

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	<p>Provision in English literature is very good. AS/A2 results in 2003 were high and showed good achievement. Standards are currently very high. Very good teaching and students' very positive attitudes enable them to achieve very well.</p> <p>Provision in Spanish is excellent. AS/A2 results in 2003 were very high and much higher than expected from boys' GCSE grades. Outstanding teaching enables students to achieve very well.</p>
Mathematics	<p>Provision in mathematics is excellent. Achievement is outstanding for the very large number of students who study the subject in Years 12 and 13. AS/A2 results are high. Students respond very positively to excellent and challenging teaching.</p>
Science	<p>Provision in biology is very good. AS/A2 results in 2003 were high. Very good teaching and students' very good attitudes enable students in Years 12 and 13 to achieve very well.</p> <p>Provision in chemistry is satisfactory. A2 results are above average and indicate satisfactory achievement. AS results in 2003 were below average and unsatisfactory. In current classes in Years 12 and 13, standards are above average, teaching is satisfactory and students' achievement is satisfactory overall.</p> <p>Provision in physics is very good. AS/A2 results in 2003 were high. Students are highly motivated. Very good teaching and students' high mathematical skills result in very good achievement.</p>
Information and communication technology (ICT)	<p>Provision in computer studies is very good. AS/A2 results in 2003 were high. Very good teaching helps students in Years 12 and 13 to achieve very well and to reach high standards.</p>

Humanities	<p>Provision in geography is very good. AS/A2 results in 2003 were high. Very good teaching and management ensure that students achieve very well.</p> <p>Provision in history is very good. A2 results in 2003 were well above average. AS results were, most unusually, below average. Standards are currently very high and indicate very good achievement as a result of very good teaching and students' very good attitudes.</p>
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	<p>Provision in design and technology is good. AS/A2 results in 2003 were above average. Standards are currently above average and indicate good achievement. Very good teaching helps those students who did not previously study some aspects of the course to fill gaps in their knowledge.</p>
Visual and performing arts and media	<p>Provision in art and design is very good. AS/A2 results in 2003 were well above average. Standards are currently very high. Very good teaching helps students to achieve very well.</p> <p>Provision in music is very good. AS/A2 results in 2003 were well above average. Standards are now high and represent very good achievement. Very good teaching and outstanding extra-curricular activities enhance students' learning.</p>
Hospitality, sports, leisure and travel	<p>Provision in physical education is very good. AS/A2 results in 2003 were well above average and indicated very good achievement. Standards are currently well above average in Years 12 and 13. Very good teaching and excellent extra-curricular opportunities contribute to very good achievement.</p>

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students receive **very good** advice, guidance and support throughout Years 12 and 13. They receive excellent support in completing their applications for higher education and appropriate careers advice. Teachers check students' progress thoroughly and frequently and set challenging targets for academic and personal development. Students joining the sixth form from other schools receive particularly good support and encouragement that help them to settle in very well. The courses provided match students' aspirations and capabilities very well. As a result, rates of retention are high on all courses. The school seeks the views of students and acts upon them suitably.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are **very good**. There is a very clear emphasis on raising standards further in the sixth form. Very effective management and a shared commitment among staff ensure that monitoring and evaluation of policies succeed in raising achievement for students of all ethnic backgrounds and capabilities. Very good use of assessment shows students how to improve. As in Years 7 to 11, a very positive outcome of management is the excellent ethos and racial harmony. The school meets statutory requirements for sixth form provision.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students have very positive views about the school. They are very proud to be part of the sixth form. They have no major concerns.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Standards are very high overall. They represent very good achievement by the end of Years 9, 11 and 13.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are very high and are well above average for selective grammar schools.
- Boys of all ethnic backgrounds achieve very well.
- GCSE results and achievement in mathematics are outstanding.
- Even though GCSE results are very high, they are improving at an above average rate.
- GCSE results at grades A* and A are rising fast.

Commentary

1. When they enter the school in Year 7, boys have very high standards in English, mathematics and science. In other subjects, standards on entry are above average overall.
2. In 2003, results in the National Curriculum tests in English, mathematics and science, taken in Year 9, show that boys achieved very well overall, taking into account their very high starting points. Results in all three subjects were in the top five per cent for schools nationally. The results were higher than predictions based on pupils' levels of attainment on entry to the school and were above average for selective grammar schools. Results in mathematics were well above average for grammar schools. The school's performance in these national tests is improving at the same rate as the national improvement. This indicates good achievement because the school starts from a very high level.
3. GCSE results are consistently very high. They are rising at a faster rate than the national improvement. This is an excellent performance because the school's starting point is very high. In 2003, GCSE results were well above average for selective grammar schools and represented very good achievement for boys of all ethnicities. All boys attained at least five GCSE A*-C grades. Results at grades A* and A are rising. In 2003, three out of five GCSE passes were at grades A* or A. In English and mathematics, four out of every five boys in Year 11 attained these high grades. The school comfortably exceeded its suitable targets for GCSE performance in 2003.

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	100.0 (98.0)	52.0 (50.0)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	100.0 (100.0)	91.0 (91.0)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	100.0 (100.0)	96.0 (96.0)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	55.2 (52.2)	34.7 (34.7)

There were 100 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

4. In Years 7 to 9, standards observed in lessons and in the sampling of boys' work match the very high standards attained in recent national tests. They show that pupils are reaching even higher standards by Year 9 than predicted from their levels of attainment on entry. Achievement is very good overall. It ranges from excellent in mathematics to satisfactory in citizenship.

5. In Years 10 and 11, standards are currently very high overall and indicate very good achievement across subjects. Standards are very high by Year 11 in English, mathematics, science, modern foreign languages, geography, history, music and religious education. They are well above average in art and design, citizenship, design and technology, ICT and physical education. Achievement is outstanding in mathematics and music and very good in English and science. It is good or better in all other subjects apart from citizenship in which achievement is satisfactory.
6. Boys of all ethnicities achieve equally very well. The excellent racial harmony and the school's extremely positive ethos enable all pupils to participate very actively and confidently in their studies. The boys make very good progress in class work and homework because they have a strong desire to succeed and receive considerable support and encouragement from staff. The school is, with considerable justification, very proud of its success in promoting the all-round, as well as the academic, development of its pupils. As a result, boys have a very mature and purposeful approach to their studies.
7. Although the school has no pupils with statements of special educational needs, a very small number of boys have learning difficulties such as dyslexia. These pupils play a full part in all classes and make similar progress as other pupils. They receive additional support from teachers as required and benefit from a weekly session of specialist help. The school has identified those pupils who are gifted or talented. These boys receive work of suitable challenge and difficulty and achieve equally as well as other boys. A sizeable minority of boys are bilingual or multilingual. Their proficiency in English is well above average and more than sufficient to cope with the speaking and writing requirements of all subjects.
8. Pupils' very good achievement across subjects is partly due to their very good command of basic skills. They use their well above average literacy skills and very high mathematical skills to support and develop their work across subjects. When opportunities occur, they make effective use of very good computing skills to extend and enrich their work. Although their reading and writing skills are well above average, many boys, including the large number who are bilingual or multilingual, experience difficulties in syntax and often lack expression when reading aloud.
9. Other important contributory factors to rising standards are: the high expectations of staff and pupils; the excellent attitudes to work shown by the boys; the increasingly effective use of assessment to set challenging targets and to show pupils how to improve; and the excellent provision of a wide range of extra-curricular activities of high quality, particularly in drama, music and sport.

Sixth form

Standards are very high in Years 12 and 13. They indicate very good achievement overall.

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

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	96.8 (96.7)	91.5 (90.3)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	55.9 (45.3)	36.1 (35.5)
Average point score per pupil	396.5 (383.0)	253.1 (254.5)

There were 101 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very high and indicate very good achievement overall.
- Achievement in mathematics is excellent.
- AS and A2 results were very high in 2003.
- Standards in chemistry are above average but achievement is below that in other subjects.
- A few students do not read aloud or speak with sufficient expression.

Commentary

10. Taking into account the standards of boys who join the school in Year 12, the overall attainment of students on entry to the sixth form is well above average for the courses that they study. Results in AS and A2 examinations in 2003 were very high and represented very good achievement overall. Rates of retention of students on the AS and A2 courses are high.
11. In Years 12 and 13, standards of work in subjects inspected and sampled represent very good achievement. In the 13 subjects that were the focus of the inspection, standards are currently very high in English literature, mathematics, art and design, biology, computer studies, history, music, and Spanish. They are well above average in geography, physical education and physics and above average in design and technology and chemistry.
12. Achievement is excellent overall for the very large number of students studying mathematics. It is very good in most of the other subjects and is satisfactory in chemistry. Achievement is very good overall in Years 12 and 13 because students respond very positively to the high expectations set. For example, they receive very challenging targets for performance in AS and A2 examinations. Frequent tracking of students' progress and provision of very good support and advice as needed ensure that students work at full stretch.
13. Other very positive influences on very good achievement include very good teaching and students' very mature and purposeful approach to their studies. Students make very effective use of their well above average reading and writing skills and their high mathematical skills to facilitate their work across subjects. They make competent use of their very good ICT skills to research and present their work. A few students are not as good at expressing themselves orally as well as they do in written work.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Boys' attitudes, behaviour and relationships with others are excellent. Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development, are excellent. Attendance is very high and punctuality is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Boys' excellent attitudes and behaviour make a very positive contribution to their learning.
- Relationships across the school are excellent.
- Boys of all ethnicities in the school integrate very well and racial harmony is excellent.
- Pupils' enterprise and willingness to take responsibility enhance their all-round development.
- Very high attendance promotes continuity and progression of learning.
- The personal development of boys is excellent in Years 7 to 13.

Commentary

14. Boys have excellent attitudes to the school that are reflected in their high attendance and their commitment to study. Discussions with boys in all years indicate that they enjoy coming to school. Very large numbers take part in the wide range of extra-curricular activities provided by the school. For example, during the weekend preceding the inspection, one third of all boys

represented the school in rugby matches at different age groups against other schools in the King Edward VI partnership. Boys have a high regard for their teachers. Relationships among pupils of all ethnic backgrounds and between staff and pupils are outstanding. These relationships have a very positive influence on boys' learning. In virtually all lessons seen, pupils participated eagerly and very productively in the tasks set. They remained firmly on task and worked very co-operatively, sharing resources and ideas. They responded extremely positively to the very high expectations the school has of all its pupils. Boys' willingness to be enterprising and to take responsibility is excellent and promotes their all-round development.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	3.9%	School data	0%
National data	7.2%	National data	1.1%

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

15. Attendance is very high and contributes very well to the pace and continuity of learning. Boys' punctuality is good overall. Whilst a sizeable minority of pupils arrive late at school, they do so for acceptable reasons, such as the late arrival of a bus or train. Pupils' good punctuality to lessons throughout the day ensures that lessons start promptly and the use of time is efficient.
16. The excellent behaviour of pupils helps to create a very good climate for learning in class. In almost all of the lessons seen, boys' attitudes and behaviour were very good and often exemplary. Pupils work hard and enthusiastically, co-operate well together and with their teacher and, therefore, make very good progress during the lessons. Boys are very well aware of what is and what is not acceptable behaviour. They have a very good understanding of the school's system of rewards and sanctions. They accept readily the principle of sanctions as an appropriate response to any instances of unsatisfactory behaviour. Outside of lessons, boys of all ethnic backgrounds mix together very well. Before and after school, at lunchtime and breaks, they chat and socialise easily together without any signs of inappropriate behaviour. Racial harmony is excellent. The few pupils with special educational needs show the same very positive attitudes to school as their fellow pupils. Boys are extremely courteous and treat the school's accommodation and equipment with care and respect. There is very little litter around the site.
17. Bullying is only a very occasional problem. The school has a good anti-bullying policy that makes clear that it will not tolerate bullying, Staff react very quickly to any instances of bullying. Parents and pupils indicate that these procedures are effective. The number of boys excluded in the previous academic year was quite low for the size of school. Scrutiny of the school's exclusion records shows that the use of exclusion has been appropriate in the circumstances. The school has good procedures to ensure that boys have suitable work to complete whilst excluded and to reintegrate them quickly back into the school.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	374	4	0
White – any other White background	15	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	7	1	0
Mixed – White and Asian	3	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	23	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	149	5	1
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	61	3	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	50	1	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	6	0	0
Black or Black British – African	8	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	18	0	0
Chinese	16	0	0
Any other ethnic group	11	0	0

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

18. Boys make very good progress in their personal development. Staff encourage them to take responsibility and to use their initiative. Older boys mentor younger pupils and many study and qualify for the Junior Sports Leader Award. These activities help to raise boys' self-esteem and confidence and assist their development as independent learners.
19. The school plans and creates an excellent and unique ethos in which the boys thrive. Consequently, the personal development of the boys is outstanding. Teachers provide many very good opportunities for them to develop their self-knowledge and spiritual awareness. Respect for the feelings, values and beliefs of others is a very prominent and positive feature. The school is an excellent cultural, ethnic and religious mix. It values, shares and celebrates the achievements of all boys across a very wide range of activities. A Christian group meets weekly to talk, pray and to become involved with other schools in Christian action. Rooms are available to any religious group on request, for example for Muslim boys during Ramadan. Visits to the local Sikh temple extend the spiritual awareness and cultural development of boys of different faiths.
20. Moral education is excellent. Pupils develop a very strong sense of fairness, honesty and respect for each other. They know how to determine right from wrong. Cultural and multicultural development is excellent. The school celebrates the contemporary culture of its pupils through outstanding events such as the 'Festival of Cultures' day, which parents praise as a highly valuable experience for boys of all ethnic backgrounds. The music and drama departments make excellent extra-curricular contributions to enrich boys' cultural and social experiences. Boys enjoy performing plays and participating in bands, groups, musical shows, festivals and residential workshops. The modern foreign languages department offers a full range of exchanges and visits to France, Germany and Spain that help many boys to gain a very good understanding of life in a foreign country.
21. Social development is excellent. Boys develop a strong sense of responsibility for living together in a community. For example, they raise large sums of money to support a wide range of charities. Assemblies celebrate the successes of all. Boys take responsibility very

readily and are sensitive in exercising it. Despite a shortage of lockers, boys leave their bags unattended anywhere around the school, confident in the knowledge that they are safe from tampering. The school council is developing. Boys participate eagerly in regulating their own society and having their own views valued.

Sixth form

Students' behaviour and attitudes are excellent. Attendance is very high. Personal development is excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' excellent attitudes and behaviour contribute to outstanding all-round development.
- Students take on responsibility very readily and are excellent role models for younger boys.
- High participation of students in school and community activities enriches learning.
- Excellent relationships contribute to the excellent ethos of the school.
- Very high attendance promotes very good achievement.

Commentary

22. Students' excellent attitudes and behaviour play an important part in their very good progress in lessons. There have been no exclusions of students from the sixth form. Excellent relationships among students of all ethnic backgrounds and between staff and students create a very positive atmosphere for learning. Very high attendance ensures very good continuity and progression in learning.
23. Attitudes to the school are excellent. Students study very hard and are keen to take an active part in the life of the school and the wider community. They are very willing and confident to assume high levels of responsibility. For example, they work very diligently and conscientiously in mentoring pupils in the main school and in the local junior schools. Many qualify for the Community Sports Leaders Award and help young pupils in the local community to develop their skills in a range of sports. Students exercise responsibility very well through involvement in the school's prefectorial system. They participate very actively in a wide range of activities including fundraising for charity, sporting competitions and supervising boys in the main school at lunchtime and breaks. A team of senior prefects, co-ordinated by the school captain and vice captain, manage these activities very effectively.
24. The excellent behaviour of sixth formers plays an important part in their very good progress in lessons. They are polite and courteous and provide very good role models for younger boys. The excellent provision for social, cultural and moral development of students continues in Years 12 and 13 and spiritual development remains very good. Students make an excellent contribution to the Children's University summer schools. They make a very important contribution to the school's excellent ethos. They help to raise substantial funds to support a range of charities and have a real concern for those less fortunate than themselves.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a very good quality of education for boys of all the different ethnic backgrounds. The very good curriculum provides a very wide range of worthwhile activities, in and out of class, to meet the needs of all boys. The accommodation and resources available meet curricular needs well. The quality of care is good overall. Boys receive very good support, advice and guidance.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is very good throughout. Assessment is very good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching leads to high standards and very good achievement by Years 9 and 11.
- Excellent teaching in mathematics leads to outstanding achievement in GCSE examinations.
- Assessment and marking promote learning and show boys how to improve.
- Boys receive little teaching across subjects of higher-order literacy and oracy skills.
- The teaching of citizenship lacks consistency across subjects.

Commentary

25. The very good quality of teaching and the very good learning that results are important factors in boys' very good academic and all-round achievements. In views presented before the inspection, parents, with considerable justification, expressed great confidence in the quality of teaching and commended the school on its high expectations. They were particularly pleased that teachers placed equally strong emphasis on the academic and the personal development of boys.
26. Although the school experiences difficulty in recruiting teachers of sufficient expertise in a few subjects, such as mathematics, procedures to ensure a consistent quality of teaching for pupils work well. The commitment of permanent staff provides very effective support for supply or temporary teachers. Trainee teachers receive particularly good support that enables them to use their subject knowledge very competently to assist boys' learning.
27. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. The proportion of very good and better teaching observed has increased to almost three in five lessons. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. The good implementation and use of performance management and other systems are helping to share very good practice in teaching and learning within and across subjects. Teaching is outstanding in mathematics and very good in English in Years 7 to 11. In science, teaching is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teaching is very good throughout Years 7 to 11 in geography, history, modern foreign languages, physical education and religious education. It is at least good in other subjects, apart from citizenship in which it is satisfactory, mainly because the co-ordination of the teaching of citizenship across subjects lacks consistency.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 178 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
16 (9%)	85 (48%)	58 (33%)	19 (11%)	0	0	0

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

28. Good or better teaching occurred in nearly nine out of every 10 lessons observed. A prominent feature of these lessons was the very effective use of teachers' expertise in the subject to enthuse and motivate the boys. Very competent explanations of the work and well-informed and probing question-and-answer sessions increased pupils' confidence and challenged them to think hard. Teachers ensure that the boys know what they have to learn and the relevance and context of it. In all years, the planning of lessons, based on the three-part lesson, keeps the boys working with interest, productively and at pace so that they make good or better progress. Mental and revision exercises provide a stimulating start to lessons. The main activities provide work which interests and challenges boys to work at levels appropriate to their capabilities. They ensure progression and continuity of learning. At the end of most

lessons, pupils consolidate their learning by discussing actively and rigorously what they have learned, revising it and placing it in the context of future learning.

29. High expectations of staff and pupils are evident in the vast majority of lessons. Lessons start promptly and proceed at pace because boys are very keen to do their best and make an extremely positive contribution to their own learning. They have a very good capacity to work independently and collaboratively. They complete homework conscientiously, so that any lessons depending on the previous completion of homework proceed without delay. Because pupils have particularly good skills in literacy, teachers in all subjects set work that makes suitable demands of their reading and writing skills and develops their research and investigative skills. Boys use their mathematical skills very effectively to extend their work in subjects such as geography, science and design and technology. Teachers' insistence on good behaviour and the exemplary attitudes of boys to their studies ensure a very good climate for learning in the classroom. Pupils have a good ability to translate theory into practice, as observed, for example, in physical education and music lessons.
30. Features of the best lessons were observed in a Year 11 mathematics lesson. Pupils were aware very quickly of the purpose of the lesson and what they had to learn by the end of it. A brisk question-and-answer session reinforced pupils' previous learning and tested their skills in algebraic manipulation. High expectations were apparent as the teacher teased out explanations from boys about solutions of linear and quadratic equations. The series of increasingly difficult exercises and activities in the main part of the lesson enabled pupils to proceed at their own best pace. Pupils worked independently and the teacher provided individuals with support as required. At suitable times, the teacher checked that the whole class had gained a good understanding of the work in order to move to the next stages. The boys know how to check and test their own work and progress. They were sufficiently mature in their learning to use calculators only for complex calculations, preferring to rely on their mental skills wherever possible.
31. The teaching of literacy is good across subjects. However, teachers do not often pay attention to developing the higher-order literacy and speaking skills of boys. As a result, a few boys, though reading aloud accurately, do so hesitantly and often without expression. The teaching of numeracy is good. Teachers in many subjects provide good opportunities for boys to use their mathematical skills and understanding to develop their subject work. Teachers use ICT competently to present work in an interesting way to pupils. Boys often use ICT to enhance their work in subjects.
32. Although no pupils are listed for special educational needs, a few boys require help for dyslexia or dyspraxia. Teachers know the needs of these boys very well. They make appropriate use of individual education plans to provide them with work of suitable challenge and difficulty. The part-time specialist staff provide these boys with very good support in special weekly sessions.
33. When teaching was only satisfactory, the teacher tended to direct too much of the work and to provide the same work for all pupils, regardless of their different capabilities. Very occasionally, as observed in design and technology, a non-specialist teacher lacked a confident knowledge of the topic taught. In a few lessons, pace slowed because the work did not stretch the higher attainers and the copying down of notes wasted teaching time.
34. Assessment and its use to raise achievement have been a successful focus for improvement, particularly in the past 18 months. Assessment is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 to 13. A real strength is the very good use of data to set targets, to track individual students' progress and to indicate where pupils are underachieving. Teachers' marking is very good overall and boys and parents appreciate this. Much of the marking includes comments that show pupils how they should improve their work. It is easier for pupils to know how well they are doing in Years 10 to 13, as they are aware of progress towards their targeted examination grades. In Years 7 to 9, departments report National Curriculum levels to parents

at the end of Year 9, as they are required to do, but few teachers disclose to pupils in Years 7 to 9 the National Curriculum levels towards which they are working. The school monitors performance by ethnicity rigorously to ensure that all boys make progress at suitably fast rates. They do this very sensitively and in a way that does not detract from the school's excellent racial harmony. Good identification and assessment of the needs of the few boys who need special help ensure that these pupils achieve as well as other boys. Rigorous and effective monitoring and accompanying review result in suitable targets for improvement for these boys.

Sixth form

Teaching and learning are very good. The use of assessment is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching leads to high standards and very good achievement overall by Year 13.
- Very effective assessment and challenging targets stimulate students to do their best.
- Students receive little teaching across subjects of higher-order literacy and oracy skills.

Commentary

35. Teaching in the sixth form is of the same very good quality as it was at the previous inspection. Teaching was very good or better in two out of every three lessons observed in Years 12 and 13. In the 13 subjects inspected in detail, teaching is excellent in mathematics and Spanish, satisfactory in chemistry and very good in the other 10 subjects. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Features of good and better teaching are the same as those in Years 7 to 11.
36. The quality of learning is very good on AS and A2 courses because students of all ethnic backgrounds and capabilities have exemplary attitudes, are highly motivated and work very hard and productively. They respond enthusiastically to excellent encouragement and challenge from teachers. Students consolidate their learning by completing homework, coursework and other assignments very conscientiously and thoroughly. They develop very good skills of independent learning and enjoy research work. Students have confidence in teachers' very good knowledge of the specialist subject. Teachers know the requirements of the AS/A2 examinations very well and ensure that students are fully aware of what to do to gain the highest grades and have plenty of practice in examination techniques. Students benefit from many good opportunities to carry out their own research and to think for themselves.
37. Teachers know the students very well and, accordingly, provide work of considerable challenge and difficulty. They make very good use of assessment to keep students well informed about their work and progress and to set and review targets. Form and subject teachers work closely with the head of sixth form to track the progress of students in order to detect underachievement at an early stage and to determine what to teach. Teachers mark students' assignments very well. Students feel that they receive very good support and guidance in how to raise their standards.
38. The teaching of the key skills of literacy, ICT and numeracy are good overall. Students make very effective use of the very good facilities in the library to develop their work during school hours. As in Years 7 to 11, students have very good skills in literacy but receive little teaching across subjects of the higher-order skills to develop their use of syntax and to improve expression in speaking and writing.
39. Many of the features of the best teaching and learning took place in a Year 13 biology lesson dealing with detoxification of the liver. After a clear explanation of the work to be done and its purpose, the teacher skilfully used her very good subject knowledge to stimulate students'

interest in the subject. Students' answers to questions and discussions about the work showed that they had a very good understanding of previous aspects of the topic. An excellent *PowerPoint* presentation enabled students to see vividly what happens to liver tissue at successive stages of alcohol abuse. Excellent questioning forced students to think deeply and to use their skills of observation and analysis. Students enhanced their moral awareness through very good discussions about issues relating to liver transplants and who should receive them. Extension work for the gifted students enabled them to extend their understanding through a data analysis exercise. The teacher also ensured that appropriate and timely support was available to assist any student who experienced difficulty keeping up with the others.

40. Assessment and marking are very good and make an important contribution to students' very good achievement. The practice of setting subject minimum attainment targets for students, which are up to one grade higher than predictions based on GCSE performance, motivates students to work very hard and enthusiastically. Students improve their work because they keep their own progress files and carry out frequent self-reviews of academic performance. Teachers ensure that students know how well they are progressing and what they must do to reach their targets.

The curriculum

The curriculum is very good. It provides very well for boys' needs and aspirations and meets statutory requirements. Excellent opportunities for enrichment enhance boys' all-round development substantially. Provision of staffing, accommodation and resources for learning is good overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum provides very good challenge for these very high-attaining boys.
- High participation in excellent extra-curricular activities, especially in sport, drama and music, enriches boys' learning and personal development considerably.
- Excellent community links enhance learning.
- Provision for citizenship lacks consistency.

Commentary

41. The suitably broad curriculum meets statutory requirements and provides a high intellectual challenge for boys of all ethnic backgrounds. It contributes very positively to pupils' very good achievement. The curriculum and timetable have improved well since the previous inspection. The length of single lessons is now more appropriate and has resulted in more efficient use of teaching time. An increase of nearly two hours in total teaching time has resulted in nearly all subjects having enough time to cover syllabuses in suitable detail. Design and technology now operates as a full GCSE course in Years 10 and 11 and the short GCSE course in religious education has been introduced in Year 10. However, time allocated for design and technology in Years 8 and 9 remains low and, consequently, limits the range of learning activities. The school's status as a sports college has extended the range of courses provided in physical education. The previously reported weakness in provision for ICT across the curriculum has been tackled successfully and computing facilities have improved substantially. However, scope exists for more use of ICT to promote teaching and learning in a few subjects such as religious education and citizenship.
42. The curriculum makes good provision, through weekly sessions of specialist teaching and effective use of individual education plans, for the very few boys who require special help in respect of dyslexia or dyspraxia. As a result, these boys keep up with the progress made by other pupils. The many bilingual boys have very good skills in English and do not need additional help to cope with curricular demands of subjects. However, the school makes little provision across subjects to ensure that all boys receive consistent teaching of the higher-order literacy and oracy skills. As part of its involvement in the Excellence in Cities initiative,

the school has identified the gifted and talented boys. It makes suitable provision for these pupils through extension work in class and through such demanding extra-curricular activities as entries to national mathematics competitions and specialist sports coaching.

43. Provision for modern foreign languages, in which standards are high, is an interesting and very positive feature of the curriculum. The three languages, French, German and Spanish, share equal prominence. Each year the first foreign language provided in Year 7 rotates. Currently, Spanish is the first language in Year 7, French in Year 8 and German in Year 9. All boys study a second foreign language in Years 8 and 9 and have a free choice of which language to take up. All pupils study at least one foreign language in Years 10 and 11, and one in five boys in the current Year 11 studies two foreign languages. Well-established and very successful exchange links with France, Germany and Spain enhance the linguistic skills and promote the personal development of many boys of all ethnic backgrounds. Improved and excellent facilities in music have resulted in larger numbers taking up the subject in Years 10 and 11. The provision of separate courses in physics, chemistry and biology, taken by all boys in Years 7 to 11, meets boys' aspirations and parents' wishes.
44. The school has implemented, and monitors effectively, the recent national guidelines on teaching in Years 7 to 9. It draws on elements that are relevant and pertinent for its pupils. For example, most teachers in all years make very effective use of challenging starter and plenary activities to add interest and pace to lessons.
45. High and active participation in an outstanding, varied and challenging programme of extra-curricular activities enhances considerably the academic and all-round development of boys of all ethnic backgrounds. It is a considerable strength and contributes substantially to the school's excellent ethos and racial harmony. Expertise from within and outside the school provides this enrichment. The many support classes and clubs help boys to achieve very well academically. Boys value very highly the excellent sport, music and drama provided outside normal lessons. The school's strong commitment to its development as a specialist sports college and the provision of 27 different sporting activities give all boys very good opportunities to succeed in sport. Provision in music caters for the tastes and skills of boys of all ages and different musical capabilities through wide-ranging activities such as rock band, Dhol group (Tabla drums), senior and junior concert bands, big bands and 'little' big bands, string ensembles and orchestra. The school's drama and musical productions are of very high quality. Boys extend their social and cultural development through many visits within the locality and outside, including residential visits, sporting tours and trips to other countries. Activities such as the 'Festival of Cultures', which boys and parents appreciate greatly, deepen boys' knowledge and understanding of their own and other cultures and contribute to the school's excellent racial harmony.
46. All boys have a weekly personal, social and health education (PSHE) lesson that includes appropriate teaching of health, drugs and sex education. This good programme includes aspects of citizenship and, from Year 9, careers education. The school is aware that the teaching of citizenship across subjects needs clarification. It is developing an appropriate scheme of work to provide a separate lesson in citizenship to replace the current inconsistent provision. Provision for careers education is good. Boys have good access to the careers library and receive very good advice from teachers about future educational and careers options. Boys in Year 11 benefit from a two-week work placement. The vast majority of boys wish to continue to higher education. Curricular provision in Years 10 and 11 serves this aim very well.
47. The number and deployment of teaching and support staff meet curricular needs very well. Funding from the Leadership Incentive Grant has enabled the school to improve provision of teaching in key areas such as mathematics. It has also resulted in the creative use of a technician to relieve teachers of some non-teaching tasks, so that teaching and learning in ICT are improving across the school. Staff have the appropriate qualifications and experience

to teach the courses timetabled for them. The use of support staff is efficient and contributes well to preparation and running of lessons.

48. Resources for teaching and learning meet curricular needs well. A key issue at the previous inspection was to improve organisation and management of the library. The school is, justifiably, proud of its current very good library provision. Boys speak highly of it and appreciate the very good support and guidance from the librarian, who works very closely with teaching staff to ensure that provision meets curricular needs. The Victorian library provides a suitable range of fiction and access to ICT facilities in a separate area linked to a learning resources centre. Boys of all ethnic backgrounds make very good use of its facilities to support their learning, including before school and during lunchtime breaks. They receive good encouragement to use the available books and computers, particularly if they lack these facilities at home.
49. The accommodation supports curricular requirements well in nearly all subjects. However, it is inadequate in design and technology and art and design and restricts the range of learning activities in these subjects. Plans to improve this accommodation are under consideration and include the installation of a lift to ensure that wheelchair access is possible to more areas of the school. The excellent teaching and performing facilities in music have a very positive effect on the quality of education in music. Good technical and studio facilities help to promote interest and high standards in drama. A language laboratory of high quality encourages high achievement in modern foreign languages. Recently updated older rooms have enhanced the learning environment in ICT and geography.

Sixth form

The quality of the curriculum is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent extra-curricular provision enriches students' personal development substantially.
- The range of subjects meets students' interests and aspirations very well.

Commentary

50. The good range of AS and A2 subjects and excellent enrichment opportunities meet students' needs and aspirations very well. Accordingly, retention on sixth form courses is high. Curricular provision has improved well since the previous inspection. AS/A2 courses have been developed in drama, design and technology and physical education. New subjects such as psychology and geology have been introduced in response to students' wishes. The large majority of students aspire to higher education and the inclusion in the curriculum of computer studies widens their opportunities. Students enhance their learning about careers through involvement in such activities as the 'Young Enterprise', 'Engineering in Education' and 'Challenge of industry' courses and through the school's very close links with major companies.
51. The PSHE programme and the AS/A2 general studies courses enable all boys to enhance their personal, social and moral development and to develop their awareness of citizenship. These courses meet students' statutory entitlement to religious education. Further enrichment opportunities are open to all students. These include work experience, community service and service within the school. Links through the physical education department's involvement in the Sports Leaders programmes enable students to work with other schools and in community activities. Students derive equally excellent benefits as the boys in Years 7 to 11 from the outstanding programme of extra-curricular activities in which they play a very full and active part. Provision of staffing, accommodation and resources is good and meets curricular demands well.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides a good quality of care for boys of all ethnic backgrounds. It provides very good personal support and guidance. Very good induction procedures enable boys to settle quickly into the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent relationships between staff and pupils help to provide excellent pastoral care.
- Pupils receive very good support and guidance from staff.
- Very good procedures for induction help boys to settle quickly into the school.
- A few aspects of the management of health and safety are not as effective as they should be.

Commentary

52. The school is committed to providing a safe working environment for staff and pupils. The health and safety policy meets statutory requirements. However, a few aspects of the management of health and safety are not as effective as they should be and were brought to the attention of the headteacher during the inspection. First aid provision is good. There are sufficient qualified first-aiders and the school keeps good records of accidents and injuries. Arrangements for risk assessment for educational trips and visits are good. Overall, arrangements for child protection are satisfactory. The deputy headteacher is the designated officer and has received appropriate training. The school follows the local child protection procedures and has its own specific policy. However, there has been insufficient recent training of other staff.
53. The school's pastoral system is very well organised and supports the welfare of boys of all backgrounds. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Every boy has the opportunity to have a trusting relationship with one or more adults in the school. Older boys act sensitively as peer mentors for younger pupils. All Year 7 pupils have older boys as mentors, who help them to settle in well and provide them with very good advice and support as and when they need it. Tutors and heads of year help pupils very well. Staff and pupils know one another very well and interact well both inside and outside the classroom. Boys feel very confident about approaching teachers, should any problems of a personal nature arise, in the safe knowledge that appropriate support and guidance would be forthcoming. Tutors and heads of years have regular meetings to discuss boys' academic and personal progress and to take appropriate action as necessary. The very few boys who need help because of learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, receive very good care and sensitive support that enable them to keep up with their peers. Individual education plans, though currently under review, provide helpful advice to teachers and appropriate targets for the boys concerned.
54. Good procedures help boys to settle quickly into the school, even though they come from as many as 70 different primary schools. Parents receive very good information and guidance about these procedures and how they can help to prepare their sons for life at this school. Parents and pupils visit the school and meet with the boys' tutors and peer mentor prior to admission.
55. Very good procedures for transition for Year 11 boys who intend to study in the sixth form ensure a brisk and purposeful start to studies in Year 12. All boys have an interview with the head of the sixth form in which they receive frank and impartial advice on careers and further study opportunities. Boys value the further advice and guidance provided in Years 10 and 11 through the PSHE programme and work experience placements.
56. The school actively seeks boys' views of the school mainly through the school council and discussion time in lessons. It values these views and, whenever practicable, takes them fully into consideration when reviewing policies and procedures.

Sixth form

Students of all ethnic backgrounds receive a very good quality of care, personal support and guidance.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students receive very good support and guidance from staff.

Commentary

57. Very good procedures for students' induction into the sixth form help them to settle in quickly to their new courses. During Year 11, they receive very good information and guidance about opportunities for continuing their education post 16, primarily from the head of the sixth form. All students have an interview with a careers advisor. At open evenings, parents and pupils look at predicted GCSE results, consider future career ambitions and discuss with teachers the appropriate courses to match these ambitions. In discussions, students indicated that the advice and guidance they received before entry to the sixth form were helpful and appropriate.
58. The quality of support, advice and guidance provided for students in the sixth form itself is very good. The form tutor stays with the same group throughout Years 12 and 13 and is available at convenient times to give advice and guidance to students on academic or personal problems, on a confidential basis when necessary. Early in their first term, students receive specific help in study skills to assist them in their learning. All students follow the sixth form guidance programme that helps to support their academic and personal and social development. The very good pastoral support enables students to concentrate well on their studies.
59. Students have a good amount and quality of academic support. Teachers assess work quickly and provide constructive comments and very good guidance to students on how to improve their work. Tutors keep good records of students' academic and personal development and use these very well to set targets for improvement. The very well planned programme of advice and guidance relating to university entrance provides excellent information and help for students. The careers library gives students good access to a wide range of useful guidance materials.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents and with other schools and colleges are very good. Partnership with the community is excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good links with parents make a good contribution to boys' learning at school and home.
- Excellent links with the community enhance learning.
- Very good links with other schools and colleges support boys' personal development.

Commentary

60. The school enjoys the same very good partnership with parents that existed at the time of the previous inspection. Views expressed in the parents' questionnaires and letters completed for the inspection and at the parents' meeting were very positive about the quality of education provided by the school. Parents are very pleased with the progress their sons make, the quality of teaching and the expectation that their children will work hard. Parents also indicated that boys enjoyed coming to school, that the school is helping their sons to become very mature and responsible and that the school's leadership and management are of high quality. The findings of the inspection strongly endorse these very positive views.

61. The quality of information given to parents is good. The school prospectus and governors' annual report provide a wide range of information about the school and its activities and meet statutory requirements. Regular newsletters and letters about specific events keep parents up to date about current school activities. The homework record provides parents with a very effective means of communication between home and school. Attendance at the meetings to discuss boys' progress is very high and reflects parents' very keen interest in their children's education. Parents receive two progress reports and an annual report. Overall, these reports are of satisfactory quality. They give clear guidance on boys' attainment and progress, although they do not always provide targets for improvement. The school seeks actively the views of parents, and takes account of these when determining or revising its policies and procedures.
62. Parents' involvement in their children's learning is very good. They support their sons' learning at home and provide substantial financial assistance to the school that has a very positive effect on the provision of learning resources and materials. The school co-operates fully with parents of boys with special or additional educational needs in reviews of progress and to help them with their sons' learning. The active Parents' Association organises many social and fund-raising events. It raises large amounts of money to improve the accommodation and to finance additional learning resources. The Parents' Association provides good assistance at parents' evenings. For example, they make telephone contact with all Year 7 parents prior to the autumn term parents' evening to give them the opportunity to raise any concerns.
63. Links with the local and wider community are excellent. Through these links come many learning opportunities. For example, the 'Engineering in Education' scheme enables sixth formers to work with local companies to solve engineering problems. One group of students worked at a large car manufacturing company and another group spent a day with an accountancy firm. These links also provide valuable work experience placements for all Year 11 pupils. The school makes very good use of the local community's facilities. Visits to a local museum and library support boys' learning in art and design and design and technology. Local field trips promote pupils' learning in history and geography, whilst visits to theatres and art centres enrich and extend boys' learning in English, art and design and drama. Boys play a full and active part in sports competitions with other schools. Many community sports clubs make extensive use of the school's sporting facilities, which enhances the school's standing in the local community.
64. Links with other schools and colleges are very good in the main school and excellent in the sixth form. Links with local primary schools, particularly through the school's specialist sports college status, are a particular strength and are of mutual benefit. The school's sporting facilities provide the focus for improving standards in physical education and sport among local primary school pupils, which in turn helps the older boys to gain Junior Sports Leaders Award and Community Sports Leaders Awards. Excellent links with universities and colleges provide support and effective preparation for the next stage of students' education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The overall quality of leadership and management is very good. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent, management is very good and governance is excellent.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good leadership and management help to create an excellent ethos and racial harmony.
- All staff and pupils have a sharp focus on raising achievement.
- Very good systems for monitoring performance are raising standards.
- Very good financial management supports learning.

Commentary

65. The headteacher and governing body provide a very clear educational direction for the school and have extremely high expectations of staff, pupils and students. They plan very carefully and effectively to ensure that the school provides a very good quality of education for high-attaining boys of all the different ethnic backgrounds found in the school.
66. The governing body is very supportive, active and committed to the school's continuing improvement. It contains several old boys of the school and its members reflect the range of different ethnic groups within the school. Governors are justifiably proud of the school's many and considerable strengths. They are particularly pleased with the school's strong and successful emphasis on promoting the all-round and personal development of boys. Governors work hard and with great determination, as for example, in supporting the school's successful bid to become a specialist sports college. They help to raise large sums of money to support the school's work and to improve buildings and resources. They carry out their responsibilities very effectively. The school meets its statutory requirements.
67. Frequent meetings of the chair of governors and the headteacher help to keep governors very well informed about all aspects of the school's work and development. Governors monitor developments rigorously and effectively. They know the school's strengths and are aware of the few areas in which some improvements are needed. Frequent and rigorous reviews of the school's performance lead to effective action to improve. Governors value highly the work of the headteacher and all staff at the school. They are quite prepared to challenge the headteacher's views and to call him and senior staff to account. They set appropriately challenging targets for the school's performance.
68. With the help of the King Edward VI Foundation Office, the school's financial management and planning are very good and contribute to boys' very good achievement. They have resulted in considerable improvements in the school's accommodation and learning resources in recent times. These developments help to sustain a very good environment for learning and support the excellent ethos evident in the school's daily life. The latest available audit of the school's finances indicates that the financial systems operate well. Appropriate checks and comparisons take place to ensure that the school spends its money carefully and gets good value. It uses specific funds coming into the school, such as those for sports college developments, building programmes and standards funds, properly for their designated purposes.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3 006 941	Balance from previous year	40 905
Total expenditure	2 958 993	Balance carried forward to the next	88 853
Expenditure per pupil	4081		

69. The excellent leadership and commitment of the headteacher are key elements in the school's continued success and constant drive for higher standards. Under his strong guidance and visible presence around the site and at extra-curricular activities, the school seeks to achieve a high quality of performance in all aspects of its work. There is a distinct lack of complacency. The school has sustained and built upon the strengths identified in its previous inspection report in 1998 and has made very good progress since. It is popular and hugely oversubscribed and deserves its very good reputation in the area it serves. Standards in external examinations have improved since the previous inspection and are very high at the end of Year 11 and in the sixth form. Very good improvement in respect of provision for pupils

with learning difficulties has occurred. A governor now oversees arrangements very effectively. A suitable development plan, under the direction of the special educational needs co-ordinator, provides teachers with guidance about how best to teach pupils who have special educational needs.

70. Leadership and management of subjects are very good overall. Departmental development plans link suitably to the school's development plan, which provides a very clear and appropriate set of priorities and targets for improvement. The clearly defined responsibilities of senior and middle managers lead to a very efficient management of the school's policies and priorities. As a result, boys' academic and personal development is very good. A particularly successful outcome of management is the excellent ethos and the excellent quality of relationships among boys and between boys and staff. Boys come from a large number of different ethnic backgrounds and racial harmony is an outstandingly positive feature. The very effective work of staff who oversee arrangements for the personal and academic development and care of boys ensures that all pupils are valued equally. The ethos within the school is one of mutual respect, courtesy, friendliness and a desire to succeed. As a result, the boys respond very positively to their work and enjoy school. The very effective management of the school's procedures for assessment is a contributory factor to boys' rising standards.
71. Procedures for checking how well the school is doing and planning for improvements are very good. The school analyses its data from examinations and tests carefully and uses suitable systems to assess and predict achievement. The outcomes of these procedures are very good as seen in the very good performances in external examinations. The improvement in the proportion of GCSE grades A* and A is partly a result of the school's review of its procedures for managing the coursework aspects of courses. The successful implementation of the system of performance management has helped to improve teachers' use of assessment to track boys' academic progress. Procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are effective in sharing very good practice and identifying areas for improvement. The professional development of teachers increasingly reflects the priorities of the school and departmental improvement plans and needs reported in the reviews of teachers' performances. A good programme of induction enables new and newly qualified teachers to settle in quickly to the school's routines.
72. The main aids to boys' achievement are: very high expectations; very good teaching; well above average basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT; boys' very good behaviour and exemplary attitudes to work; excellent racial harmony; very effective leadership and management; very good use of assessment; very good pastoral care and guidance; and an outstanding and wide-ranging programme of extra-curricular activities.
73. The main barriers to raising achievement are a few difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified teachers, and deficiencies in accommodation for design and technology and art and design.
74. Taking into account the funding received by the school, the social and economic backgrounds of boys and the current high quality of education and achievement, the school provides very good value for money.

Sixth form

The leadership and management of the sixth form are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership sets a very clear and realistic direction for further improvements.
- Very effective management promotes the all-round and academic development of all students.
- Very good monitoring and tracking of progress contribute to students' very good achievement.

Commentary

75. Very good leadership and management in the sixth form set a clear and very positive direction for further improvement. Very effective co-ordination of the work of subject and form teachers and a sensitive approach ensure that students of all ethnic backgrounds and different capabilities receive very good advice, support and guidance that help them to seek high standards in academic work and in their all-round development. As a result, sixth form students are excellent role models for younger boys. The excellent ethos and racial harmony in the school are very evident in the sixth form.
76. Very good planning results in an outstanding quality of education in Years 12 and 13. Very good and increasingly effective systems to track students' academic and personal development help students to raise standards. Students find that the courses available suit their aspirations and career interests. They benefit from frank and realistic appraisals by teachers during Year 11 about their potential attainment in advanced level studies. In Years 12 and 13, the thorough analysis and feedback to students about their progress and how to improve ensure that they know how close they are to reaching their full potential. Consequently, rates of retention of students on AS and A2 courses are high and they respond very positively to the challenging targets for improvement. Students' destinations after leaving the school are usually and appropriately to higher education, sometimes after taking a gap year.
77. Governors are very supportive of current developments in the sixth form and played an active part in setting up the current leadership arrangements. They keep well informed about all aspects of the sixth form's work, including standards, staffing and the curriculum. The school meets statutory requirements for sixth form provision. The sixth form is cost-effective in relation to the school's expenditure as a whole.
78. The main aids to raising achievement are: very good teaching; high retention of students on AS and A2 courses; very good management; very effective use of assessment; very good enrichment through extra-curricular activities and links with the community; and students' exemplary behaviour and attitudes to work. There are no major barriers to higher achievement, but a few students do not, despite their high attainment, develop higher-order literacy and oracy skills across subjects.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are very high, above average for selective schools and represent very good achievement.
- Very good teaching helps boys to achieve very well.
- Very good leadership and management ensure the sharing of very good practice.
- Boys' very positive attitudes and very good relationships ensure very good progress in lessons.
- A few boys have difficulties with syntax and higher-order language skills.

Commentary

79. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 are very high. They are broadly the same as those of other selective grammar schools. In 2003, the results indicated good achievement compared with boys' standards on entry in Year 7. GCSE results in English are very high. In 2003, they were above those for selective schools and indicated very good achievement, with four out of every five boys in Year 11 gaining GCSE grades A* or A in English language. Results have remained consistently high in recent years and boys of all social and ethnic backgrounds achieve equally well.
80. In Years 7 to 9, standards are currently very high. Boys write with interest and fluency, developing their ideas with imagination and creativity. They grasp challenging literary texts such as *Twelfth Night*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Measure for Measure* with enthusiasm and understanding. From the start of Year 7 pupils discuss and write openly about moral, ethical and social issues. Boys share and challenge each other's ideas with enthusiasm and a true sense of intellectual curiosity. They do not shy away from challenging the teacher's views when an opportunity presents itself. They are highly motivated and set themselves very high standards. They work hard in lessons, and on homework tasks. Standards rise further in Years 10 and 11 as the boys mature. They demonstrate very good skills of critical analysis in class through discussions and individual presentations. These skills of critical analysis prepare them well for AS/A2 study.
81. Achievement is very good throughout the school. In Year 7, pupils have already developed very good literacy skills. By Year 11 their ability to express ideas and to argue their points of view and shape complex arguments is outstanding. Boys' understanding of character, context and themes and their ability to recognise implicit meaning in study of literature are excellent. The small number of pupils in Years 7 to 9 with lower levels of syntax and literacy skills receive additional support tailored to their needs and, consequently, make the same very good progress as other pupils.
82. Teaching and learning are very good overall in Years 7 to 11. All of the teaching observed was good or better. In the very good lessons, skilful and careful planning provides a range of activities and a balance between whole-class, paired and individual working so that boys sustain their interest throughout. Work in drama enhances further the concentration of the boys. Lessons move forward at a lively pace matched to the rapid learning capacity of the pupils. Boys respond very positively to the many opportunities for sustained collaborative and

independent learning. Marking and assessment are thorough so that pupils know what they need to do in order to improve. In the occasional lesson, the teacher did not ensure that every boy concentrated fully on the work.

83. Pupils' very positive attitudes and very good behaviour enable them to enjoy the work and to make very good progress in most lessons. A minor exception occurred in a Year 9 class, in which the teacher dealt effectively with some immature behaviour. Boys are active learners and participate fully in a wide range of activities, including visiting the theatre, which further enriches their experience and learning.
84. Very good and enthusiastic leadership results in committed teamwork, which ensures that high standards are part of everyday work, and has a collective determination to offer the pupils only the best. Very effective management enables the team to share very good practice through frequent and regular departmental meetings. The introduction of drama in Years 7 to 9 is making a very good contribution to enhancing boys' learning. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. The English department has sustained its previous strengths and standards are rising. The department has developed its work with the greatly improved library and introduced a number of schemes to support literacy, such as passport to reading.

Drama

85. The teaching of drama is through English in Years 7 to 9. Drama is an optional, separate subject in Years 10 to 13. Standards at the start of the GCSE course are already high. GCSE results have consistently been very high and represent very good achievement for boys of all social and ethnic backgrounds. In 2003, GCSE results were very high with half of boys entered achieving A* or A grades. Boys value drama highly because they find it fun and enriching.
86. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 develop the skills of researching the social and historical contexts of drama texts as a basis for devised pieces. They understand the technical and practical aspects of stagecraft, such as movement, mime, gesture and expression. Boys deal sensitively with topics such as racial abuse and the experiences of different communities. They rehearse character sketches well and portray them sensitively. They interpret character and theme and evaluate their own performances with insight. In the lessons seen, all pupils showed an excellent insight and made very good progress in the practical skills integral to drama. The regular visits to the theatre by all pupils, particularly those doing GCSE, enrich boys' social and cultural experiences. Several boys enhance their speaking skills through teams entered annually for public speaking and debating competitions in the Midlands.
87. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers use their wide-ranging subject knowledge to plan lessons very well. They balance practical activity with whole-class teaching and involve pupils in evaluation, which leads to very good learning. Practical activities take place in short and effective bursts, developing skills such as concentration and expression. Boys have only satisfactory skills in voice control and projection and many lack confidence to perform in a theatrical manner. They have very good collaborative skills and work independently, keenly and conscientiously to improve their dramatic skills. Positive and supportive assessment, particularly through boys' self-evaluation, identifies key learning points for improvement.
88. Very good leadership demonstrates how the subject promotes the social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of pupils. The well-equipped drama studio has sound and lighting systems and blackout facilities, which serve the GCSE groups well. However, the size of the studio limits the type of work that larger classes in Years 7 to 9 undertake. Boys from King Edward VI Aston School and girls from the sister school, King Edward VI Handsworth school, of all ages, showed engagement and enjoyment of the highest order in the current rehearsals for *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

89. Standards of literacy are well above average across the school. Boys make very effective use of their high standards of reading and writing to extend and support learning in all subjects. Boys read with fluency and understanding in all subjects. They undertake a wide range of writing including news reports, letters, leaflets about the homeless and argument or persuasion, as well as factual writing. In all subjects, teachers provide very good opportunities for discussion and debate that help to develop their skills in speaking and listening. In science, pupils learn to consider carefully the definitions and use of words and technical terms. In modern foreign languages, boys improve their linguistic skills from the start of Year 7, through the strong emphasis on the correct use of grammatical terms and parts of speech. In religious education, history and geography, many opportunities for discussion and debate help to shape the excellent skills in speaking and listening that are a feature of the school. Frequent and regular participation in extra-curricular activities such as the various debating competitions further enhance language and literacy. Boys who experience difficulties in syntax and higher-order literacy skills receive good support, through additional classes in Years 7 to 9, thus enabling them to achieve as well as other pupils.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Boys reach very high standards in all three languages as a result of very good teaching.
- Very positive attitudes help pupils to achieve very well.
- Excellent opportunities to take part in foreign exchange visits help boys to develop their language learning.
- Most boys do not use the foreign language enough in everyday classroom conversations.

Commentary

90. The school provides teaching in the three modern foreign languages of French, German and Spanish. Each year the first foreign language provided in Year 7 rotates. Currently, Spanish is the first language in Year 7, French in Year 8 and German in Year 9. All boys study a second foreign language in Years 8 and 9. They have a free choice as to which language they take up.
91. In 2003, teachers' assessments of boys' work showed that standards were well above the national average at the end of Year 9 and represented very good achievement. GCSE results in all three languages, French, German and Spanish, were very high. They also indicated very good achievement. Boys' GCSE results in modern foreign languages were higher than those they gained in most other subjects.
92. In Years 7 to 9, boys of all ethnic backgrounds have a very good understanding of spoken language. Speaking skills are highly developed and pupils apply grammatical rules accurately in writing extended texts. Accuracy is of a high order because teachers correct errors rigorously. Standards are currently very high and indicate very good achievement.
93. Boys have very high standards in languages in Years 10 and 11 and continue to achieve very well. As a result of teachers' high demands and of the boys' very positive attitudes, standards in understanding the foreign language and in writing are very high. Pupils speak and write confidently and very competently in the foreign language. They develop a very thorough knowledge of a wide range of grammatical structures that enable them to produce accurate and suitably detailed writing.

94. Teaching and learning throughout the school are very good. Sometimes, they are excellent. Teachers plan their lessons very well and enable pupils to develop their language skills through a wide range of appropriate activities. A very lively pace, coupled with the opportunity to take an active part in most lessons, sustains boys' interest. Teachers have high expectations as shown in the constant challenge that they set pupils by using the foreign language extensively in the classroom. However, boys do not use the foreign language routinely to communicate with the teacher or with one another. Teachers contribute very effectively to pupils' literacy development by encouraging them to think about patterns in language. A strong emphasis on accuracy in the use of grammar and in pronunciation enables boys to reach very high standards. Very effective use of the language laboratory enhances pupils' learning by giving them very good opportunities to work independently. Teachers make extremely effective use of satellite television broadcasts to enable pupils to hear authentic, up-to-date news items and to develop their understanding of spoken language.
95. The three heads of subject provide very good leadership that has a clear focus on improving standards further. Very good teamwork and collaboration ensure the successful operation of a system whereby the first foreign language is rotated on a three-year basis. Very good management enables the very effective sharing of best practice. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Standards are even higher and previous strengths remain.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very high at all levels.
- Pupils' learning is outstanding and leads to excellent achievement.
- The excellent leadership and management ensure excellent teaching from a very strong team of well-qualified specialist teachers.

Commentary

96. Standards on entry to the school in Year 7 are high. In 2003, results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were very high and were well above average for grammar schools. They indicate very good achievement. Standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 are very high and boys' achievement is excellent. They develop a very good foundation in all aspects of mathematics, especially in basic number and algebraic skills, to underpin later work. They move very quickly on to develop more abstract thinking such as the concept of proof. In a Year 7 lesson, boys were investigating the properties of number walls and the effects of altering both the number of bricks in the bottom course and the numbers they contained. They all were capable of searching for patterns, making hypotheses, testing and refining them when necessary. The highest attainers moved on to attempt generalisations and to seek proof of the generalisation.
97. In 2003, GCSE results were very high. All boys in Year 11 gained grades A*-C and four out of every five gained grades A* or A. These results represented outstanding achievement based on boys' performance in the national tests two years earlier. The results were high compared with those attained in other grammar schools. Standards of work observed in Years 10 and 11 are very high. Many boys in Year 11 are working very competently on concepts such as the calculus, beyond the scope of the examination requirements. The cumulative effect of consistently excellent teaching, pupils' hard work and exemplary attitudes leads to excellent achievement throughout Years 7 to 11.
98. There is no significant difference in achievement among ethnic groups in work observed, or as shown in test and examination results. A feature of all mathematics lessons is the very close

collaboration among boys of all ethnicities that enables them to discuss and debate their work with confidence.

99. Teaching and learning are excellent. In all of the lessons observed, teaching was at least good, and in the majority was excellent. Scrutiny of boys' work shows that they have experienced excellent teaching over a period that has challenged them to reach the highest standards. All teachers have high expectations of pupils' work in class and for homework, and of their behaviour. The well-established classroom routines ensure that no time is wasted and that boys work very productively, with interest and at pace. Teachers' consistent insistence on high standards results in pupils coming to lessons prepared to work hard. Boys use ICT very effectively whenever it is appropriate to do so and not just for the sake of it. For example, Year 9 pupils used graphical calculators accurately to carry out an investigation into the effects of varying the parameters in the equation $y = mx + c$. Boys enjoy mathematics. They take pride in their work, as shown in their exercise books, and tackle the difficult concepts with confidence. The successful implementation of the National Key Stage 3 Strategy has had a very positive effect on the variety of teaching and learning styles used.
100. The excellent leadership and management of the specialist team of teachers set very clear and high expectations for all areas of the department's work. Very effective use of funding from the Leadership Incentive Grant has led to the recruitment of well-qualified and enthusiastic teachers in an area where there is an acute shortage. The department enhances pupils' moral and personal development through, for example, teaching the importance of statistical analysis based on reliable information collected by unbiased methods. Teachers also stress to boys the difference between logical arguments based on valid premises and objective analysis, and arguments based on prejudiced premises and fallacious analysis. The department provides many opportunities for enrichment in mathematics. Boys regularly participate in national 'mathematics challenges' and gain excellent results, the majority obtaining gold, silver or bronze awards. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Standards have risen and all issues raised in the previous report have been addressed successfully.

Mathematics across the curriculum

101. Pupils' competence in mathematics is very high. The boys are all highly numerate which enhances their learning in other subjects considerably. In chemistry, they are totally at ease with the proportion calculations needed when working on moles. Pupils' graphical skills are highly developed and in geography, for example, enable them to carry out complex interpretations when working with maps.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are consistently very high and achievement is very good.
- Teaching is very good overall and contributes to boys' very good achievement by Year 11.
- Pupils' very conscientious attitudes and exemplary behaviour enhance their learning.
- Investigative skills are not as good as boys' scientific knowledge and understanding.

Commentary

102. In 2003, results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 were very high and matched those of other selective grammar schools. They indicated good achievement overall. Results were similar to those in English but below those in mathematics. GCSE results were very high in 2003 and represented very good achievement. They were well above average for selective

schools. Boys' results in biology, chemistry and physics were higher than those they gained in many other subjects. Results were similar to those in English but below those in mathematics.

103. Standards are currently very high by Year 9 and represent good achievement. However, results at the highest levels in the national tests should be even higher. The department is now providing useful study guides for boys and is improving its pre-test revision programme to prepare pupils better to gain more of the highest levels. In Years 7 to 9, boys have very high standards of knowledge and understanding of all aspects of the courses in biology, chemistry and physics. For example, they understand the electronic structure of atoms and explain how ionic and covalent bonds form in compounds. They use this knowledge very competently to explain the properties of different materials. However, boys' skills in scientific enquiry, though good, are not as good as their knowledge and understanding of science. Pupils have many opportunities to experience practical work but more often than not these require them to follow lists of instructions rather than designing, planning and carrying out their own practical investigations.
104. In Years 10 and 11, standards improve further and are very high in all three separate sciences. Standards currently indicate very good achievement for boys of all ethnic backgrounds. The large majority of boys sit GCSE examinations in the three separate sciences, with a small number taking the double award examination. The rapid pace of learning during Years 10 to 11 contributes to pupils' excellent preparation for their GCSE examinations and results in smooth transition into post-16 science courses. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, boys' understanding of how a transformer functions was at a level more usually found in sixth form work. By Year 11 pupils are scoring very high marks in their GCSE coursework.
105. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. Teachers use their excellent knowledge of the subject to engage pupils' active interest and to ensure that learning proceeds rapidly and progressively. The best lessons have a well-planned and structured range of stimulating activities that engross pupils in the work and motivate them to work very productively. Teachers' very high expectations and the high level of challenge offered means that pupils grasp new ideas quickly and make very good progress in lessons. Very good use of resources and the provision of ICT projectors and interactive whiteboards in all laboratories enable teachers to provide further support and encouragement for pupils' learning. In Years 7 to 9, when teaching is occasionally only satisfactory, the teacher's introductions are ponderous, pupils have few opportunities to think for themselves and the usual crispness in lessons is missing. Boys' attitudes and behaviour are always very good. Even when the teaching is only satisfactory, they get the most out of lessons because of their real desire to learn. Teachers provide many activities for pupils to practise and develop their high literacy and numeracy skills to support their learning in science.
106. Good leadership and management enable the three subject departments to work closely together. As a result, all staff share a commitment to improving further pupils' standards in science. Co-ordination of teaching schemes in Years 7 to 9 does not enable boys to see clearly enough the links between the subjects. Improvement since the previous inspection is good because standards and the quality of teaching have improved. However, the need remains to develop boys' investigative skills in Years 7 to 9. The use of ICT to support teaching and learning continues to develop well.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are rising and are high.
- Very good teaching in Years 7 to 9 leads to very good achievement by Year 9.

- The new computer network supports curricular development across subjects.
- Boys in Years 10 and 11 have too few opportunities to develop ideas in ICT.
- A few subjects make too little use of ICT to promote standards.

Commentary

107. Standards are currently high by Year 9 and by Year 11. Achievement is very good in Years 7 to 9 and good in Years 10 and 11. In 2003, results on the GCSE short course were well above average, although grades at A*-C were lower than in the previous year, and represented good achievement. Standards are currently higher in lessons because teachers set challenging targets and keep pupils to deadlines.
108. In Years 7 to 9, achievement is very good because the fast pace of the work matches the different needs of pupils, including the small number with special education needs, and develops boys' instinctive use of computing skills. In a Year 7 class, pupils used ICT very well to create a promotional leaflet using different ideas to find and select appropriate information. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 link pages, animation and sound in presentations with great imagination. In Year 9, pupils produce high standards of work using control software and basic electronic principles. Investigation of the United Nations website supports boys' personal and social development and their work in citizenship.
109. Standards are rising in Years 10 and 11 as a direct result of all pupils now studying the short GCSE course. Achievement, though good, is not as good as in Years 7 to 9, because pupils have less time to study the subject. In a Year 11 class, boys' skills in research and investigation produced polished projects that included very effective and competent graphs, writing for a range of purposes, and presentations that showed an awareness of audience. Boys of all ethnic backgrounds develop very good skills of research and analysis through sensitive use of the Internet and rigorous interpretation of the information gathered. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have too few opportunities to use ICT to develop their own ideas and to make things happen.
110. Very good teaching promotes very good learning in Years 7 to 9. Teachers provide a clear sequence of lessons and activities to enable pupils to practise and apply a wide range of computing skills. In Years 7 to 9, teachers have arranged the layout of the small ICT rooms imaginatively to accommodate whole classes. They provide work of suitable difficulty and appropriate challenge to meet the needs of the few pupils with learning difficulties and usually plan work for the gifted pupils. Not all higher attainers receive enough extension activities, although in Year 8, several pupils perform exceptionally well when manipulating images.
111. Teaching and learning are good in Years 10 and 11, although teachers do not have quite such high expectations of the older pupils. They use a narrower range of resources and teaching methods than in Years 7 to 9. The smaller amount of time available in Years 10 and 11 means that boys do not make the same very good advances in developing their basic ICT skills as they did previously. The lower school curriculum ensures continuity of learning and clear links between lessons. Teachers make good use of data projectors and CD-ROM resources to save time and to present their lessons very well. Teachers make good use of assessment to inform pupils about their work and progress. In a Year 10 lesson, boys' very good behaviour and concentration enabled them to become highly independent learners. They knew what they had to achieve and worked hard and at a brisk pace.
112. Leadership and management of ICT are good. They are the responsibilities of a committed team, mostly from the science department, who provide very good subject and technical knowledge. Technicians, one of whom helps teachers in the classroom, and a network manager support ICT resources. Access to ICT facilities is very good. Good practices ensure the frequent updating of equipment and restoring of older machines to avoid disruption to the continuity of pupils' learning. Pupils' confidence is very good and ICT is used regularly in

lessons for analysis. The monitoring of classroom practice is not yet fully effective in sharing ideas among the staff, including trainee teachers.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

113. Provision for the teaching of ICT across subjects and out of lessons is good overall. Nearly all of the boys have access to a computer at home. Nearly half of teachers have laptop computers but few were observed in use. Pupils practise and apply their well above average computing skills to support and extend their work in most subjects. Many teachers use data projectors to attract boys' interest but pupils' involvement with interactive whiteboards is only through the teacher's demonstration. Boys in Years 10 and 11 use computers very well to support work in mathematics, science, geography and modern foreign languages. Pupils develop their linguistic skills and enhance their cultural development through video-conferencing that takes place between the school and its Spanish exchange school. In English, teachers motivate boys by setting targets for the use of ICT to write prose, to make notes (a common practice in the school), and to write letters to authors. Word processing of homework and the use of interactive whiteboards in class are recent developments that enrich learning in history. A visiting specialist teacher provides work in music technology that provides good support for examination groups.
114. Supervised computer clubs, before school and at lunchtimes, provide good opportunities for many boys to carry out research and coursework. A computer-programming group specifically prepares boys for the sixth form. Teachers do not usually provide enough opportunities for pupils to use computers to analyse results, to review lessons, or to carry out extension and research activities, including 'What if...?' situations. In a few subjects, such as religious education and citizenship, teachers make too infrequent use of ICT to promote teaching and learning.
115. Computers in the library, resource and sixth form centres support pupils' learning out of lesson time. The recent networking of classrooms to the computer network is helping to improve the quality of teaching and learning in the classes in which teachers use the facilities to full advantage. The school's website has well-developed pages for revision and class work in art and design, geography, German, Spanish, mathematics and psychology. Very good improvement in resources and teaching of ICT is evident since the previous inspection. The school is well placed to develop the high quality and creative use of ICT.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very high and achievement is very good.
- Very good teaching and boys' very positive attitudes contribute to very good learning.
- Very effective leadership has high aspirations for boys' achievement.

Commentary

116. Standards as reported in teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9, in 2003, were well above average. They have risen since the previous inspection, but were below the targets set by the school. Currently, standards in classes in Year 9 are very high and represent very good achievement compared with boys' slightly above average attainment in geography on entry to the school. Pupils of all ethnic backgrounds describe human processes accurately, logically and in good detail. High attainers have a very good awareness of the influence of the seasons on water resources and households. In a Year 9 lesson, boys had a very good understanding

of how people's own outlooks influenced decisions about the environment, intentionally or unintentionally.

117. GCSE results are very high. In 2003, all pupils passed at grade C or above with three out of every five entrants gaining grades A* or A. Standards have risen recently and are higher than at the time of the previous inspection. By Year 11, boys have a very good knowledge and understanding of environmental geography, as observed in a Year 11 lesson dealing with issues and causes of global warming and acid rain. In another Year 11 class, boys described the structure and distribution of tropical rainforests very effectively. They showed a very good insight into the effects of convectional rainfall on vegetation. In Years 7 to 11, pupils' very good skills in literacy and oracy enable them to present their work well and to discuss issues sensibly. Boys make very effective use of their very good mathematical skills to support work in geography. As a result they work very competently in work that involves estimation, measuring, calculations and interpretation and presentation of statistical data. They use ICT well for work on spreadsheets, to carry out research on the Internet and to present their findings from fieldwork.
118. Very good teaching overall ensures very good learning for boys of all capabilities in the school. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge and understanding of the examination requirements to explain activities carefully. Consequently, boys know how to improve their work and be successful at the highest levels. Teachers have very high expectations of the boys and provide stimulating lessons. The boys are well motivated and make rapid gains in acquiring new skills, knowledge and understanding. Their pace of work and their productivity is high. Teachers pay very good attention to helping boys to develop their study skills.
119. Very good leadership has clear and appropriate plans for further improvement and has high aspirations for boys' achievement. Very effective management provides good resources for learning. Monitoring of lessons ensures consistency of teaching. Good assessment and marking of boys' work help boys to consolidate their learning. The department provides very well for boys' overall development by making important contributions to citizenship and providing plenty of opportunities to discuss a range of topical and controversial environmental issues that assist boys' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Standards are higher. The proportion of very good teaching observed is higher and the department makes more effective use both of the school library and of ICT to support learning.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very high standards in all years and in GCSE examinations indicate very good achievement.
- Very good teaching helps boys to be interested in history and to achieve very well.
- The boys' very positive attitudes help them to gain knowledge and understanding.
- Very good leadership and management have created an imaginative curriculum, a sense of shared purpose and excellent relationships.

Commentary

120. Boys have gained very high GCSE results in recent years, as in 2003, and they do as well in history as their other subjects. For current pupils, standards are very high at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. All boys, including those with additional needs, achieve very well.
121. In Years 7 to 11, boys of all ethnic backgrounds have very good historical knowledge, understanding and skills. They show an exceptional understanding of the need both to respect evidence and to allow for different interpretations. Year 9 boys, for instance, engaged in a

lively and perceptive discussion about the relative responsibilities of the king, the nobility and others for the start of the French Revolution. They drew confidently on their knowledge to defend their views and to refute others. Boys research thoroughly and develop high analytical skills. GCSE coursework reflects students' outstanding ability to evaluate the usefulness of sources and to link cause and effect.

122. The quality of teaching and learning is very good with some excellent features. Teachers use their expertise and enthusiasm to enable boys to understand what it is to be a historian. High expectations and excellent relationships cause lessons to be rigorous and purposeful. As a result, boys are confident to ask searching questions and to explore issues. This was evident when a Year 11 class examined the origins of the Cold War. Skilful planning by the teacher enabled a Year 9 class to discuss the controversial moral and historical issues surrounding the causes of World War I, objectively and sensitively. Probing questioning extends and deepens the thinking of older pupils. However, questioning of younger pupils tends to confirm what they know rather than cause them to think hard. Teachers teach literacy well. Almost all boys select and organise relevant information to produce accurate, structured work that uses dates well. A few teachers use ICT imaginatively, but only occasionally. As a result, learning does not always benefit from the wide range of visual and aural approaches to sources of information of high quality. Boys work well independently. They make good use of their numeracy skills to build competent, chronological foundations for their work.
123. Very good leadership and management produce high standards and very good achievement because of the staff's high aspirations, very good teaching, effective teamwork and organisational skills. Teachers keep all practices under review and support the school's priority of attempting to raise all teaching to the standard of the best. The careful structure of the curriculum enables adequate teaching time for each topic. Boys, therefore, have the time to sharpen their knowledge, skills and understanding. Teachers monitor boys' performance comprehensively and give clear advice about areas for improvement. Marking is of excellent quality. The high uptake of the subject and the consistently improving examination results reflect the commitment and expertise of those who teach history. Since the previous inspection, staff have enhanced the curriculum, assessment and aspects of their teaching. As a result, improvement is very good.

Religious education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very high and achievement is excellent by Year 9 and very good by Year 11.
- Boys study their own faith in depth whilst learning to understand and tolerate others' beliefs.
- Racial harmony is excellent and contributes to high achievement.
- Very good teaching helps boys to achieve very well.
- Teachers do not use computers to support whole-class teaching and to enrich learning.
- A shortage of some books occasionally slows progress.

Commentary

124. Standards are very high by Year 9. They indicate excellent achievement for boys of all ethnic backgrounds and religious faiths, because many boys start from a low base of prior knowledge. In Year 7, boys produce very good projects based on their own faiths. They develop very good skills of researching independently and using computers. They make particularly good use of the library's resources to support their work. In Year 8, boys recognise and explain symbolism in mediaeval art. In Year 9, boys discuss intelligently the moral and social aspects of *Lord of the Flies*. They write out accurate simplifications of the Ten Commandments and use these to consider what rules and regulations should apply in different societies.

125. Standards are very high and represent very good achievement by Year 11. They match the very high GCSE results gained in 2003. In Year 10, pupils have a very good knowledge of the Apostles' Creed. In Year 11, boys extend their knowledge and understanding of Judaism whilst carefully practising examination skills. They have very good recall of previous work and have very good skills of working independently in the library. Those who gained GCSE grades A* or A in Year 10 extend their understanding of different religions through study of topics such as attitudes to abortion and study their own religions in greater detail.
126. Teaching and learning are very good in Years 7 to 11. Teachers' excellent expertise and an encyclopaedic knowledge of examination requirements underpin a very well organised course. Teachers use carefully selected materials, mostly produced in-house, to stimulate boys' interest. Very good continuous assessment helps boys to improve and enables teachers to keep a close watch on their progress. Boys follow a multi-faith approach whilst studying their own faith in depth. Rotating groups ensures that all boys have opportunities to work independently in the library at one of six faiths. Teaching is very challenging, makes boys think deeply and often evokes profound responses from boys. Vivid video clips, such as from *The Simpsons*, rivet boys' attention and enhance learning. Pupils acquire very good skills of independent study and organise their materials very well. They use computers at home and in the library to support their work. Teachers make very little use of ICT to promote teaching and learning in the classroom and, accordingly, miss opportunities to enrich learning further. Very good teaching of literacy results in boys' writing at length, becoming increasingly fluent as they move through Years 7 to 11. Boys listen with respect to others and co-operate very well in pairs and groups. The spiritual and moral development of the boys is very good. Most lessons have pauses for reflection and Year 11 boys discuss the nature of God unselfconsciously. The harmonious relationships among boys of all ethnic backgrounds in class are one of the school's strengths.
127. Leadership and management are very good. The department meets statutory requirements for the teaching of religious education in all years. No boys opt out of religious education. Improvement since the previous inspection is good and standards are higher. There are insufficient Bibles for one each and sharing occasionally slows progress. Opportunities to teach citizenship are identified but not declared so that boys are not always aware when the teaching of citizenship takes place in religious education.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and indicate very good achievement in Years 10 and 11.
- Good teaching and boys' very good attitudes to work promote good learning.
- Unsatisfactory accommodation and the low amount of time in Years 8 and 9 restrict the range of learning opportunities and restrict boys' progress.
- Very good use and application of computer-aided design enhances pupils' work in all years.
- Limited resources for computer-assisted manufacturing slow progress in control technology.

Commentary

128. GCSE results at grades A*-C in 2003 were high but results at grades A* and A were below average. Although these results indicated good achievement overall, they were lower than the previous year and boys attained lower grades in design and technology than in their other subjects.

129. Boys join the school with standards in design and technology that are slightly above average. They achieve well during Years 7 to 9 and by Year 9 standards are above average. Boys respond very well to the challenges set and enjoy working independently and collaboratively. They learn to use a wide range of resistant materials and appropriate tools with accuracy. Boys make effective use of ICT skills to download and interpret information and photographs from the Internet as observed in a Year 9 lesson. In Year 9, pupils' work on desk tidies shows evidence of very good research skills. Boys have high standards in making models as seen in work on 'pop-up cards' and show a good understanding of the properties of asymmetric angles. Because they have limited opportunities for practical work, pupils have only satisfactory skills and understanding of construction techniques and processes. The limited amount of teaching time available in Years 8 and 9 and the unsatisfactory accommodation restrict the development of pupils' skills in the subject.
130. Currently, standards are well above average and achievement is very good by Year 11. Pupils' GCSE project work is of particularly high quality and enhanced by pupils' very good skills in computer-aided design. They are confident and very competent in the skills required in designing and making products of high quality. They showed particularly good skills in research in the project on flat-packed furniture. Designing is imaginative but sketching lacks fluency. Pupils use ICT software very competently to produce very good designs and, as seen in a Year 11 lesson, to make very good presentations of isometric projections and orthographic drawings. Practical skills have improved and are above average, but a few tend to rely on very basic construction techniques, for example preferring to use screws rather than joints. In Years 7 to 11, limited resources for computer-assisted manufacturing slow pupils' progress in control technology.
131. The quality of teaching and learning varies and is good overall. Teachers provide good individual help to boys and have very good skills in managing the class. As a result, boys' attitudes and behaviour are normally excellent and promote their learning. In the best lessons, activities match pupils' capabilities well and boys work at pace and very productively. When teaching is only satisfactory, and notably in Years 7 to 9, the pace of the lesson is slower, and boys make only satisfactory progress, sometimes because they repeat identical exercises. Activities in these lessons do not always enable boys to work with sufficient depth and breadth or ensure fast progression through a series of planned 'stepping-stones'. Very good relationships between teachers and boys create a very good climate for learning. Boys settle quickly and sustain concentration well throughout the lesson. They talk confidently about their work and most have a good understanding of how well they are performing.
132. Good leadership has high expectations and provides a clear vision for raising standards and improving the quality of teaching and learning. Good management results in effective teamwork and increasingly good use of assessment to set targets and to show boys how to improve, but does not yet ensure that monitoring of teaching leads to the effective sharing of good practice. Although the accommodation is unsatisfactory and restricts the range of activities, the department works hard to minimise the adverse effects on pupils' learning. Satisfactory improvement has been made since the previous inspection and the department is well placed for further improvements.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching helps boys to achieve well.
- Very good leadership sustains a lively and productive ethos in the department.
- Very good relationships encourage pupils to develop as independent learners.

- Inadequate accommodation and ICT resources restrict progress of some classes.

Commentary

133. Boys enter Year 7 with very varied experiences of art and design and overall standards are average. Standards currently are above average by Year 9, representing good achievement for boys of all ethnic backgrounds. Pupils make good use of their academic skills in well-produced research projects on artists' work. They gain a good understanding of art from different cultures. Boys acquire a good foundation of practical skills in a broad range of materials and techniques. Space limitations restrict the scale of working considerably for larger groups.
134. GCSE results in 2003 were well above average. They represented good achievement, but the grades were lower than those attained in other subjects by the boys concerned. Currently, standards attained by Year 11 are well above average, representing further good achievement for pupils following the GCSE course. Pupils show very good invention in their explorations of materials. However, inadequate facilities for ICT within the department hinder their development of images. A series of excellent etchings resulted from a workshop with a visiting artist, though pupils have few opportunities to encounter works of art at first hand.
135. The quality of teaching and learning is good. In Years 7 to 9, very well organised and structured lessons ensure that boys make effective use of the time available. Teachers show their knowledge and versatility through very good demonstrations that inspire pupils' confidence and enthusiasm. In Years 10 and 11, very good relationships and supportive individual tuition encourage pupils to develop a progressively more independent and personal approach to their work. Good and consistently applied procedures for assessment inform boys of how well they are doing and how to improve, though links with National Curriculum levels in Years 7 to 9 are not always clear.
136. Very good leadership shows a very clear vision and concept of art education based around developing individual pupils' creativity from a competent foundation of technical skills. Teachers work with a common purpose and are successful in sustaining a lively and productive ethos in the department. Good management helps to provide consistency in the quality of teaching and learning, though there is insufficient analysis and use of assessment data to inform planning. Improvement since the previous inspection is good as seen by rising standards by Year 9 and the maintenance of well above average GCSE results.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are very high and represent excellent achievement.
- Outstanding extra-curricular activities promote the learning of boys of all capabilities in music.
- Accommodation and resources are excellent and support pupils' learning very effectively;
- ICT resources are very good but access for pupils is limited in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

137. GCSE results in 2003 were very high and indicated excellent achievement. All of the 25 entrants gained passes at grades A*-C with 21 gaining A* or A grades. Pupils attained higher grades in music than in many of the other subjects they took.
138. Pupils enter Year 7 with broadly average standards in music. Teachers' assessments of boys' work at the end of Year 9 in 2003 indicated above average standards. Currently, standards by Year 9 are above average and indicate good achievement. In Years 7 to 9, overall

achievement is higher than expected from the good progress made in lessons, because large numbers of boys benefit from very active participation in first class extra-curricular musical activities. Boys of all ethnic backgrounds use staff notation, including the bass clef, very competently to record ideas. They use musical vocabulary very effectively to discuss features of music being studied. For example, in a lesson on serialism, boys used and discussed the chromatic scale very well and linked their knowledge and understanding with ease to the 12-tone concept. They use stylistic devices such as drones, learned earlier in the course, to enhance their compositions. Although ICT resources are very good, access for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is limited and hinders even faster progress in class.

139. Standards are currently very high on the GCSE course in Years 10 and 11 and indicate excellent achievement. Again achievement is so high because boys extend their classroom learning through excellent participation in out-of-class musical activities of very high quality. Boys are extremely competent in composing music in the Minimalistic style. They make excellent use of motif and instrumentation and have a very good understanding of form and structure. Boys use music technology resources skilfully to enhance these compositions. They discuss styles very thoroughly and knowledgeably and recognise such features of Pavan and Galliard as tempo, structure, instrumentation and timing. Boys use ICT very well to support learning and use it to demonstrate a very good knowledge and understanding of modulation and phrasing.
140. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and very good in Years 10 and 11. In the best lessons, teachers use resources such as tuned and un-tuned percussion instruments and electronic keyboards very well to build on pupils' previous learning. They plan work carefully to help pupils to consolidate the skills, knowledge and understanding developed in instrumental lessons and through extra-curricular work. Pupils respond with great enthusiasm to challenging tasks such as composing melodies over set chords in a given structure. Teachers use homework well to reinforce learning. In Years 10 and 11, teachers make more effective use of ICT to enable boys to produce mature and creative compositions.
141. In Years 7 to 9, many pupils complete the grade 1 theory examination to support their work in class. Many pupils in all years improve their musical standards through access to instrumental teaching of high quality that includes all orchestral instruments, music technology and Asian drumming. Extra-curricular activities of outstanding quality and excellent accommodation enable boys of all musical capabilities and whatever their musical tastes, to develop their interests and skills in music. They participate very enthusiastically in such activities as orchestra, big bands, string ensemble, rock groups and Dhol group.
142. Very good acting leadership and management make a very positive contribution to high standards in music. The department reaches out to boys who complete their formal music education at the end of Year 9. Excellent links with the community extend pupils' musical experiences. Pupils receive many opportunities to enhance their social and cultural development. For example, the department is currently working on a Bhangra drumming workshop with two local schools and a group from the Asian community group. Improvement since the previous inspection is good and standards remain very high.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are high and achievement is very good by Year 11.
- Very good management and a very good curriculum help to raise boys' standards.
- Excellent provision of extra-curricular activities enriches learning opportunities.

- Very good teaching enables pupils to acquire new skills and to develop existing ones.
- Very few pupils gain GCSE A* grades.

Commentary

143. Standards on entry in Year 7 are broadly average. Standards at the end of Year 9 in 2003, as shown by teachers' assessments, were above average and represented good achievement. GCSE results were well above the national average, indicating very good achievement. However, boys did not perform as well in physical education as in other subjects that they sat and the number of A* grades was low.
144. Standards are currently above average by Year 9 and indicate good achievement. The basic skills programme in Year 7 helps boys of all ethnic backgrounds to make rapid progress. For example, in a gymnastics lesson, Year 7 boys acquired and developed skills of balance, travelling and rolling. They incorporated these into a fluid sequence with smooth transitional movements. By Year 9, boys apply their skills with precision, control and fluency across a wide range of activities and sports.
145. Standards in Years 10 and 11 are currently well above average, both on the GCSE course and the main course. Year 10 pupils produce GCSE coursework of high quality, demonstrating good organisational and presentational skills. By Year 11, their written work is longer and more analytical with evidence of thorough research. Pupils give accurate, critical self-analyses of their performance in a chosen sport and link theory and practice very well. In the main course, pupils are increasingly able to select and combine advanced skills, as seen in a Year 10 rugby lesson on the different principles of seven-a-side play as opposed to full-sided games. Modules such as 'The Role of the Umpire', which reinforce values of fair play and respect for authority, are part of the Junior Sports Leader Award and help to promote boys' all-round development.
146. Teaching and learning are very good in all years. Teachers have high expectations and conduct lessons at a fast pace. They consistently link theory and practice to consolidate boys' knowledge and understanding. They modify tasks suitably to ensure the active involvement of boys of all capabilities in the subject, as observed in a Year 10 badminton lesson on different tactics for doubles play. Boys develop a very good understanding of fitness and health as a result of the consistent attention paid by teachers to preparation and recovery. Pupils devise their own circuits to improve aspects of fitness.
147. In all years, pupils learn very effectively to observe performance analytically. As a result, they give accurate and articulate feedback for improvement. This peer assessment complements that of teachers so that pupils identify their own needs and, with teachers, set suitably demanding targets for future learning. Pupils of different ethnic backgrounds collaborate well with each other and the few who have special educational needs integrate and achieve very well.
148. Leadership and management are very good and based on a determination to ensure the highest possible standards. They provide clear strategic thinking and planning, astute self-evaluation, target setting and monitoring. Continuing professional development promotes teaching and learning well because it is specific to the needs of the department.
149. A very impressive programme of extra-curricular activities, courses, trips and tours to, for example, South Africa and Ireland, enriches learning considerably. Excellent links with local sports' clubs and the community are a further stimulus to high achievement in sporting activities, as well as for boys' all-round personal development. The very good use of ICT supports learning and increases boys' motivation. Very good wall displays stimulate pupils' interest in the subject and record their success.

150. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. The Sportsmark Gold Award celebrates excellent opportunities in physical education and sport. Additional curricular provision since sports college designation has led to the introduction of dance, leadership courses for boys, and coaching and mentoring. Initiatives, such as the Junior Athlete Education programme, are planned to extend the work of the talented pupils. Accommodation has been substantially improved by the building of a new sports hall and classroom on the playing fields and helps to create a very good environment for learning. Standards continue to rise.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The focus of the inspection was on citizenship.

Personal, social and health education was sampled. In the lessons observed, boys showed a keen interest in the activities. Teaching was good overall and pupils made good progress. The subject makes an important contribution to boys' excellent personal development. Teachers provide boys with enough information to encourage discussion and debate about different topics.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and represent satisfactory overall achievement.
- Excellent extra-curricular opportunities enrich boys' learning in citizenship.
- Schemes of work for citizenship lack sufficient detail.
- Teaching of citizenship is inconsistent across subjects.

Commentary

151. Standards are well above average and represent satisfactory achievement by Year 9 and by Year 11. Teaching of citizenship takes place in tutorial periods and through work in personal, social and health education and subjects across the curriculum.

152. Achievement in lessons of the tutorial programme is good. In Year 9, boys consider 'what makes a good pupil' and, consequently, gain an insight into what makes a good citizen. In Year 11, boys write sensitively in response to photographs of vulnerable citizens such as the aged. Achievement in citizenship across subjects varies and is satisfactory overall. In a few subjects, such as English, geography and physical education, pupils achieve well because teachers have identified the aspects of citizenship to be taught and provide suitable opportunities for pupils to learn about citizenship. In English, for example, pupils carry out Internet research that increases their awareness of issues surrounding the homeless. In geography, pupils learn about different societies in studying world citizenship. In religious education, although citizenship aspects are part of the course, teachers do not inform pupils when they are learning about citizenship and, accordingly, pupils do not know how well they are doing in the subject. In a few subjects, such as mathematics and science, pupils do not extend their awareness of citizenship because teachers do not identify clearly or plan contributions to the teaching of citizenship.

153. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. They are good in the tutorial programme as a result of investment by the school in resources and staff training. The school uses its contacts in the local community very well to assist the teaching of citizenship. For example, the community policeman provides very effective support to the programme of drugs education and assists in discussions about problems of drug abuse and its impact on society. As part of the health education programme, the school nurse teaches about responsible sexual relationships. Boys have very positive attitudes, listen carefully and join enthusiastically in

discussions about roles and responsibilities. Teaching of citizenship across subjects is inconsistent, but satisfactory overall. Pupils' learning in citizenship is only satisfactory because they are unable to assess their progress and do not always know when they are supposed to be learning citizenship.

154. The school's outstanding extra-curricular provision makes a very good contribution to boys' well above average standards in citizenship. For example, boys provide very good assistance to promote sport in local junior schools and to help pupils with special educational needs in a special school. Through its status as a specialist sports college, the school has increasing and very effective links with the local community that are of mutual benefit. Excellent work by a few boys has resulted in the whole school being involved voluntarily in a charity collection for a village in Pakistan.
155. Present leadership is good and has produced a well-structured development plan and a short timescale for the development of citizenship as a separate subject. Management is satisfactory and pupils receive their entitlement to the subject. However, schemes of work for the teaching of citizenship within the tutorial period and within subjects do not define clearly enough what citizenship is and do not indicate what pupils should know and understand at particular stages.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, 13 subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

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

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	9	100	90	56	43	47.8	39.0
Biology	41	100	82	44	33	43.2	33.2
Chemistry	31	77	89	26	32	28.4	35.2
Computer studies	17	82	78	29	21	30.6	28.5
Design and technology	15	100	89	33	32	40.0	35.7
Drama	10	100	95	60	38	49.0	39.1
Economics	25	92	92	44	42	39.6	37.0
English literature	40	100	94	58	38	47.5	38.9
French	5	100	85	60	35	46.0	34.9
General studies	106	100	79	64	26	46.6	30.0
Geography	18	100	88	50	36	43.3	36.3
German	4	100	88	50	35	40.0	35.6
History	32	97	92	6	38	31.3	37.8
Mathematics	71	90	74	46	34	38.7	31.3
Music	8	100	94	50	39	42.5	39.0
Physical education	14	100	88	64	28	48.6	33.8
Physics	35	94	82	49	36	42.6	34.3
Psychology	34	75	N/a	35	N/a	33.5	N/a
Spanish	10	100	88	70	36	49.0	35.9

School's results refer to 2003; national results refer to performance in 2002.

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	4	100	96	75	49	105.0	85.1
Biology	35	97	92	63	36	96.6	74.1
Chemistry	40	95	94	50	46	86.5	81.1
Computer studies	7	100	89	71	22	100.0	64.1
Design and technology	7	100	95	57	36	88.6	76.5
Economics	12	100	96	83	46	106.7	83.1
English literature	33	97	94	67	44	97.6	84.3
French	8	100	96	50	46	95.0	83.0
General studies	87	100	90	67	29	96.8	69.3
Geography	19	100	97	63	41	97.9	80.9
German	1	100	96	100	44	100.0	82.1
History	16	100	97	81	41	100.0	81.2
Mathematics	47	100	93	60	52	93.6	84.7
Music	5	100	98	60	42	92.0	82.2
Physical education	3	100	95	33	30	86.7	73.2
Physics	35	97	93	54	43	85.7	78.6
Psychology	14	100	N/a	14	N/a	70.0	N/a
Spanish	1	100	96	100	47	120.0	83.6

School's results refer to 2003; national results refer to performance in 2002.

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

The focus of the inspection was on English literature and Spanish.

The school also provides AS/A2 courses in French and German. Results in recent years have been consistently well above average in both languages. Work in French was sampled. In the Year 12 French lesson observed, standards were very high, the teaching was excellent and students made outstanding progress. They developed their reading, listening and speaking skills using up-to-date French newspapers and broadcasts.

English literature

Provision in English literature is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and students' very positive attitudes enable them to achieve very well.
- Very good leadership helps to ensure that AS/A2 results are high.
- The highest attainers sometimes produce work of outstanding quality.
- Students develop very good critical and analytical skills and have enthusiasm for debate.

- Assessment is very effective, and students know what they need to do to improve

Commentary

156. AS/A2 results in 2003 were high and represented good achievement. Standards in current classes in Years 12 and 13 are very high, with many students working at or even beyond the highest grades. They indicate very good achievement. Large numbers take English literature at AS and A2 level. The rate of retention on these courses is high.
157. Students engage in discussion and debate at a high level. They work independently and conscientiously, shaping their ideas and opinions and debating among themselves, challenging each other, and sometimes teachers, to defend opposing points of view. An impassioned and eloquent discussion challenged the teacher's views in more than one lesson observed. Critical analysis of literary texts is very good, showing subtlety and awareness of ambiguity and moral complexity. This was particularly evident in a lesson on *Othello* in which students considered the characters of Iago and Desdemona, as seen through the eyes of other characters and those of the director. One outstanding presentation, in response to a question on *Othello*, covered a range of disciplines from theology and philosophy to psychology to illustrate the emotions, feelings and dilemmas faced by the main characters. The debate allowed every member of the group to extend their knowledge and understanding of the work. Students showed very good skills in making complex notes for examination revision and for the assignment writing set for homework.
158. Teaching and learning are very good. Students have an outstanding attitude to their work and so achievement in lessons is high. They are highly motivated to make the best use of time available. They know their learning targets and what they need to do to reach them. Students collaborate well in lessons and work hard in their own time to read and to research the social and historical contexts of literary texts and to develop their ideas and their notes. They show great dedication and commitment to producing critical writing of very good skill and maturity.
159. Teachers make very good use of their subject knowledge to enthuse and motivate all students. Assessment is very effective. Teachers tell students in simple terms when their work is off-track. Marking is careful and detailed, showing exactly what the boys need to do to improve. Very good relationships between teachers and the boys help to create a very purposeful climate for learning. Students have the trust and confidence, built over the years, to think out loud in the classroom, knowing that the teacher and other students value their ideas highly. Teachers provide sensitive support to help students to develop their ideas. Lessons proceed at a good pace and present high levels of challenge and difficulty. All students enjoy their English and, justifiably, describe their teachers as highly knowledgeable, enthusiastic, energetic and fun. The students appreciate being treated as independent learners and view the course as an excellent preparation for future studies.
160. The very good leadership of the department provides an enthusiastic commitment to ensuring that high standards are part of everyday work and has a collective determination to offer students only the best. Management of the sixth form provision is very good so that students find transition to Year 12 work smooth and supportive. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good and standards are high.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

161. Very high standards of literacy in Years 12 and 13 enable students to achieve very well across subjects. Boys make very effective use of their high standards of reading and writing to extend their work in all subjects. They communicate their knowledge of subjects very clearly in writing. They read fluently, with very good comprehension, and make effective use of higher-order reading skills such as skimming and scanning. They are fluent speakers and thoroughly enjoy discussions and debates. All 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, students are accurate in its use. Most subjects incorporate structured discussion in pairs, groups or the whole class. Teachers have been trained effectively to teach literacy. Subject leaders are required to include literacy issues when writing schemes of work in line with the school policy. Clear and sensible policies, guided by the English department, give good advice on the main aspects of literacy and on how to deal with spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Spanish

Provision in Spanish is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very high as a result of excellent teaching.
- Students respond very positively to their teacher's very high expectations.
- Opportunities to take part in exchange visits and work experience in Spain are highly effective in developing students' confidence and competence.

Commentary

162. In recent years, A2 results in Spanish have been well above average. Of 20 candidates in the past three years, 12 gained grade A and seven grade B. In 2003 AS and A2 results were very high and much higher than expected from boys' GCSE grades.
163. In current classes in Years 12 and 13, standards are very high. Students speak Spanish very competently and confidently. They express their opinions very clearly and effectively and have very good skills in pronunciation and intonation. Their understanding of spoken Spanish is excellent. The quality of written work is very good. Students use a wide variety of structures and expressions accurately in their writing. Most errors occur when they attempt very complex language. Students express mature, well-considered views on a range of topics such as politics, history and literature.
164. Teaching and learning are outstanding. The use of a native speaker and the extensive use of Spanish in lessons make no concessions to English ears. Consequently, students constantly have very high standards to which to aspire and they develop their listening skills very highly. High expectations encourage students to give of their very best. Students take part readily in discussions. They sustain and develop their views very well. They have very good research skills and use dictionaries and reference sources very effectively to supplement their learning. Very good use of the language laboratory enables students to practise their speaking, reading and listening skills independently. They use the Internet appropriately to research topics such as the development of democracy, racism and transport.
165. Excellent relationships between students and the teacher create a very positive climate for learning. Because the teacher knows the students' individual strengths and weaknesses in Spanish, students receive valuable guidance on how they can improve. They are very appreciative of the very good support provided. All five of the current Year 13 students enjoy their studies and hope to combine Spanish with another subject for study at university. Students practise and improve their linguistic and speaking skills through frequent and regular individual contact with a Spanish language assistant. They improve their knowledge and understanding of Spanish through participation in an exchange visit and by acting as English language assistants as part of an excellent work experience programme in a summer school for Spanish learners.
166. Very good leadership and management have resulted in very good improvement since the previous inspection. There is now a very clear and very well planned scheme of work that helps students to gain the highest standards. The department's enthusiasm and commitment

motivate the students to work very productively and at pace. Very effective use of assessment responds quickly to the needs of students and ensures that all are working to their potential.

MATHEMATICS

The focus of the inspection was the provision for AS/A2 courses in mathematics.

Mathematics

Provision in mathematics is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards attained are very high.
- The excellent teaching promotes students' outstanding achievement.
- Students' exemplary attitudes contribute substantially to excellent learning.

Commentary

167. A very large number of students study mathematics in Year 12. Most of these continue their studies into Year 13. A sizeable minority also study further mathematics. However, the modular arrangements have meant that in recent years the best mathematicians have not taken further mathematics. All students do pure mathematics and large numbers study decision mathematics, mechanics and statistics. Standards attained by the end of Year 13 are very high in all aspects of the courses. Achievement is outstanding in Years 12 and 13. AS/A2 results are consistently high, as they were in 2003.

168. Excellent teaching and students' exemplary attitudes contribute substantially to the high standards in mathematics observed in classes in Years 12 and 13 and in scrutiny of students' work. Teachers use their very thorough knowledge of the subject material to ensure that students have comprehensive records of the topics that have been covered.

169. Students' knowledge and understanding of the topics studied are extensive. Their very mature approach to learning ensures excellent retention and application of this knowledge. Students in Years 12 and 13 have first-rate skills in algebraic manipulation and in reasoning. They work independently or collaboratively as appropriate. They draw very competently upon facets of their previous learning when solving problems. In a further mathematics lesson, students in Year 12 were studying the process of obtaining the differential coefficient of the sine function from first principles. They encountered the problem of how to evaluate a fraction, which at first was expressed as zero divided by zero. One student offered, "One, er no; nought, er no; infinity, er no; oh, I don't know." A more accurate answer would have been impossible, having given all the obvious possibilities before concluding rightly that the expression is indeterminate. The students all quickly realised that a limiting process would be required and completed the solution properly.

170. The excellent leadership and management ensure that there are high expectations in all aspects of the department's work. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Teachers set very challenging targets for students and provide them very quickly with very good support and guidance with any difficulties they encounter.

Mathematics across the curriculum

171. Students enter the sixth form with excellent mathematical competence in all aspects. They make full use of their numeracy skills to support their work across subjects. For example, students make very effective use of their algebraic and graphical skills to make very good progress in physics. They show very good skills in interpreting and presenting statistical information in economics.

SCIENCE

The focus of the inspection was the provision for AS/A2 courses in biology, chemistry and physics.

The new geology course introduced this year was sampled. In the lesson observed, teaching was good. Students were well motivated and made good progress as they applied their knowledge gained in previous lessons to a study of lahars.

Biology

Provision in biology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- AS/A2 results were very high in 2003 and indicate very good achievement.
- Students' very positive attitudes assist their learning.
- Very good teaching and high expectations help students to achieve very well.
- A few lessons lack enough variety to encourage higher attainers to achieve even higher.

Commentary

172. A2 results in 2002 were above average. In 2003, AS and A2 results were very high and represented very good achievement. Since 1998, results have fluctuated from year to year, dipping to the lowest point in 2002. Overall, students do well in biology compared with many of their other subjects. Large numbers take biology at AS and A2 level. The rate of retention on these courses is high.
173. Standards on entry to Year 12 are above average overall, but the few who join from other schools do not generally have the same depth of background knowledge of the other students. However, they receive very good and sensitive help from teachers that enables them to achieve very well so that standards are high, overall, by Year 13. Discussion with students and an analysis of their work indicate that investigative skills are not quite as advanced as their well above average theoretical knowledge. ICT skills are improving, but a lack of enough opportunity to use the computer as a tool in science restricts progress in data-logging techniques.
174. Teaching and learning are very good overall. In the best lessons, teachers use their very good subject knowledge very effectively to motivate the students, drawing on everyday examples to enliven the content. The good structure of these lessons helps students' learning because outcomes are clear. In a Year 13 lesson, the teacher gave a very good *PowerPoint* presentation on detoxification in the liver, including the metabolism of alcohol. Although a few students found the work demanding, they achieved very well because objectives were clear, and the teacher checked their understanding at each stage and consolidated their learning by questions drawing on real-life examples. Students deepen their understanding because teachers go beyond the requirements of the syllabus to make the topics interesting. Very good relationships and the easy approachability of teachers result in students asking for help when it is needed and not falling behind. Although in most lessons teachers plan work of further challenge for higher attainers, they do not always put these plans into effect to ensure that these students are always working at full stretch. An occasional lesson lacks sufficient variety of activities and leads to students becoming a little less attentive than usual.
175. Students are highly motivated, keen to do well, and when questioned, express very positive views about the subject. They are co-operative and willing to help each other. Relationships are very good and students listen intently to the teacher and the views of others.
176. Very good leadership and management ensure that teachers work well as a team, for example in helping students to overcome difficulties. The department insists on high standards. Staff

keep detailed information about students' performance and use it very effectively to provide appropriate support for those identified as having difficulty or underachieving. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. High standards and the very good quality teaching and learning persist.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- In 2003, AS results were below average and represented unsatisfactory achievement.
- A2 results in 2003 were above average and indicated satisfactory achievement.
- A few lessons lack variety and so do not involve students actively in their learning.
- Students' very good attitudes to work contribute well to their learning.
- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching do not lead to the sharing of good practice effectively.

Commentary

177. In 2003, A2 results were above average. They represented satisfactory achievement overall, taking into account that a few students joined the school in Year 12 with lower levels of attainment in chemistry than those who had studied chemistry as a separate GCSE subject. AS results in the same year were below average and represented unsatisfactory achievement when compared with students' GCSE attainment. Standards in chemistry are not as high as those in physics and biology. A large number of students take chemistry at AS and A2 level. The rate of retention on these courses is high.
178. Current standards in Year 12 are above average. Achievement, at this stage of the AS course, is satisfactory. In Year 12, students understand atomic structure, how this is reflected in the position of elements in the periodic table, and the associated trends in the properties of these elements. In Year 13, achievement overall is satisfactory on the A2 course. Students have a reasonable knowledge and understanding of aromatic compounds in organic chemistry, including the Friedel-Craft reaction mechanism. However, a few students who joined the sixth form in Year 12, having not followed the GCSE chemistry course, have found this area of learning very difficult and struggle to keep up.
179. Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers use their very competent knowledge of the chemistry topics to provide clear demonstrations and explanations. They use practical work well to illustrate teaching points and to develop students' learning. Students engage fully in the activities, concentrate well and work productively. However, a few students are too reticent to ask questions when they are not clear about an area of learning. Questioning is not always rigorous and probing enough to ensure that these students understand the work fully. Teachers do not use a wide enough range of teaching methods to involve students more actively in their learning. Students have excellent attitudes to their studies, producing their own comprehensive set of course notes. This contributes well to their learning, which is good.
180. Leadership and management are satisfactory. They provide a clear sense of direction and a shared commitment to raise standards. However, the review and evaluation of the impact of teaching on learning and progress are not effective enough in sharing good practice. Accommodation used to teach chemistry is adequate, though a few lessons do not take place in laboratories. Teachers do not always make the most effective use of time when practical facilities are not available. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory because standards have fallen. Numbers opting for chemistry have increased.

Physics

Provision in physics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in current classes and AS/A2 results are well above average.
- Very good teaching leads to students' very good achievement.
- Very good leadership has enabled the department to maintain its high standards.
- Marking is conscientious but does not always provide students with targets for improvement.
- Students' high mathematical skills result in very good achievement

Commentary

181. Large numbers take physics at AS and A2 level. The rate of retention on these courses is high. AS and A2 results were well above average in 2003. They indicate very good achievement, based on their prior GCSE attainment, for students of all ethnic backgrounds.
182. Standards observed in lessons, and in the scrutiny of work, were high and indicated very good achievement. In Year 12 lessons, students carried out a practical activity to investigate the refraction of light through a glass block, under test conditions. They had very good theoretical knowledge and appropriate practical skills to work precisely to achieve very good outcomes. They discounted and repeated anomalous results, and obtained additional results to help them to obtain an accurate conclusion. Their very impressive numeracy skills, graph drawing and understanding of the algebraic theory helped them to work very competently and at pace. In a Year 13 lesson, students gained a very good understanding of how to use Young's slits experiment to measure the wavelength of a light source. Most of the students studying physics joined the course from the main school. However, a sizeable minority come from other schools. They reported facing considerable difficulty in the first term of Year 12, but they quickly made progress and currently achieve as well as the other students.
183. Teaching and learning are very good. Searching questioning by teachers and stimulating discussion in lessons develop students' ability to relate their factual knowledge to a clear understanding of underlying principles. Teachers' consistently high expectations of students provide work that constantly challenges students to think hard. As a result, progress is rapid. Teachers give individual support for students' learning both in lessons and at other times. Students value the excellent access they have to staff, who willingly provide additional informal tutorials. Very effective and innovative use of resources promotes learning. Physics teachers make excellent use of ICT projectors and whiteboards to support teaching and learning. Students' excellent attitudes to their studies ensure very good achievement. Students improve their work because they are aware of their target grades and how well they are doing. The conscientious and informative marking of homework and set questions consolidates their learning because teachers provide detailed advice and corrections when errors have been made. Teachers do not monitor students' own course notes routinely to check that they are accurate for revision purposes.
184. Very good leadership and management contribute to students' very good achievement. The department evaluates its performance critically and plans well for further improvements. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. The department has sustained high standards, numbers studying physics have increased and teaching has improved.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus was the course in computer studies to AS and A2 level.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- AS/A2 results in 2003 were high. A2 results consistently represent very good achievement.
- Very good teaching helps students in Years 12 and 13 to achieve very well.
- The courses meet students' needs and aspirations.

Commentary

185. A2 results in 2003 were very high and indicated very good achievement for the seven students involved. At AS level, a dip in performance compared with the previous year resulted in 14 of the 17 students achieving grades B to E, but these grades represented good achievement for the students concerned. Currently, standards are very high in Year 13 and represent very good achievement.
186. All but one student continued from AS to A2 in 2003. These Year 13 students are making very good progress on the computer-programming course, which matches their aspirations very well. The very good quality of teaching, and the positive attitudes and response of the students, lead to very good progress in lessons on the AS and A2 courses. Students work very hard and prepare well for lessons. Achievement is very good rather than excellent because students do not always take the initiative in developing their own learning skills and knowledge even though they are self-critical and self-knowing to a large degree. They supplement their learning well, taking notes using computers. They make sensible and very effective use of the work of past students whose exemplar work is of the highest quality.
187. All students require much support at first in Year 12 because standards on entry are difficult to measure against unrelated Year 11 work. Progress is rapid because teaching focuses on basic as well as higher-level skills. Students use computers very competently to take notes. They develop their computing skills by using the network to share in the presentation of work with the teacher, and through involvement in the use of computers in the general life of the school. A few students acquire sufficiently advanced skills, knowledge and understanding to write software programs to support file management systems. Other students consolidate their skills through supervision of extra-curricular computing activities and clubs.
188. Students value the teacher's role as a critical friend. In a Year 12 lesson, the teacher reviewed the moderation feedback from AS coursework. Students' very positive responses made them more aware of the importance of such literacy aspects as the use of spelling checkers and the use of apostrophes. They have a well above average knowledge of the theory elements of the course and have very good analytical skills. All students have a very good awareness of the use of ICT in society. In a Year 13 lesson, students were very confident and competent in using websites for research but less effective in validation and presentation of their work.
189. Teachers' very good subject knowledge and experience in teaching at advanced level ensure very effective learning. Students' very good skills as independent learners are a main reason that they are all on target to reach the predicted high grades.
190. Very good departmental leadership and management ensure that the teaching of ICT is very good and resourced well. The preparation of students for examinations is effective. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Strengths identified previously remain. Increased resources and an improved status for the subject are attracting higher numbers of students, including some from other schools.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

191. Students make good use of their well above average ICT skills to support and enhance their work across subjects in the sixth form. They practise and improve their ICT skills in subjects such as science, design and technology, mathematics, music and modern foreign languages. They make very good use of computer-aided design to complete projects and assignments in design and technology. Students are very competent in using digital cameras in physical education, drama and art and design to record work for later analysis. In science, students use ICT to measure the wavelength of light and use the interactive whiteboard to display video clips. Students receive few opportunities to extend their learning in class through the use of ICT in data logging. The use of interactive whiteboards positively influences learning in several subjects. Most of the work in ICT involves research activities. Students enjoy using computers to improve the presentation of their work. Video-conferencing enhances the language skills and cultural development of students in modern foreign languages.

HUMANITIES

The focus of the inspection was on the GCE A2/AS courses in geography and history. Work was sampled in psychology. In the Year 13 psychology lesson observed, standards were above average. Good teaching helped students to increase their knowledge and understanding of aversion therapy and various conditioning theories.

Geography

Provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- AS/A2 results in 2003 were high and represent very good achievement.
- Very good teaching and management ensure that students achieve very well.
- Teachers' high expectations and students' very positive attitudes promote learning.

Commentary

192. Geography is quite a popular subject for study in the sixth form. Rates of retention on courses are high. AS/A2 results in 2003 were high and indicated very good achievement compared with students' GCSE attainment.

193. Standards in Year 12 are currently high and represent very good achievement. Students have a well above average, in-depth knowledge of human and physical processes and the extent to which one process impinges on another. Year 12 students demonstrated very good knowledge and understanding of location factors while developing case studies of regional shopping centres. Standards at A2 are high and reflect very good achievement. Year 13 students made good use of previous knowledge in developing awareness of the hazards associated with transmittable diseases. In both years, students quickly learn the key facts in new topics and know how to apply them to develop their work. They have particularly good skills in extracting and using appropriate information from large documents.

194. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge to illustrate topics with appropriate examples, referring students to relevant text and websites for further background reading. They use their very good understanding of the examination requirements to give students clear explanations of how to improve their work and to achieve the highest grades. Teachers' high expectations and strong emphasis on individual students developing their study skills promote learning. Teachers use extra-curricular time to help students to raise their attainment. The frequent and regular marking of students' work to examination criteria and the interpretation of mark schemes to students enable them to make very good progress. Students receive valuable, detailed feedback, verbally and in writing,

which helps them to improve their work. Students are well motivated and work at pace and very productively.

195. Very good leadership and management have ensured very good improvement since the previous inspection. Examination results are higher now. The increase in the use and availability of ICT within lessons has helped standards to rise. All teachers use ICT well to support students' learning. Teachers keep a careful watch on students' performance to detect underachievement quickly and to show them how to improve.

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards on the AS and A2 courses are very high and represent very good achievement.
- Students achieve very well because skilful teaching helps them to develop the ability to hypothesise, analyse and deduce.
- Teaching and learning are very good; teachers have both an excellent knowledge of the subject and an infectious enthusiasm.
- Very good leadership and management provide very effective support to all groups of students.

Commentary

196. History is a popular sixth form subject. Retention on courses is high for those who start the AS and A2 courses. A2 results in 2003 were well above average, as they have been in recent years, when most students gained the highest grades. Four out of every five of the candidates achieved an A or B grade in 2003 and made better progress than expected from their GCSE results. AS results were, most unusually, below average in 2003. However, the school has disputed these results with the examination board. Standards of these particular students who are currently studying history in Year 13 are well above average.

197. In Year 12, standards are well above average on the AS course. Students use a very wide range of historical skills to produce structured arguments in very well written essays. They understand how political, social, religious and economic factors affect history. In a lesson on whether or not it was possible for Queen Mary to re-establish Catholicism, students demonstrated a sure grasp of historiography. In Year 13, they build on these very competent foundations to hypothesise, analyse and deduce cogently when faced with historical problems.

198. Very good teaching with some excellent features reinforces these very high standards. Teachers show excellent subject knowledge and convey a sense of enthusiasm. Students respond keenly to the emphasis on rigour. They take pleasure in the scholarship that develops their higher-order skills of analysis and investigation in written work and discussion. In this respect, the insistence on students knowing about a subject before discussing it led to informed debates in lessons about Luther and the German Reformation and 'Young Ireland'. Students participate fully in discussions, partly as a result of their excellent rapport with teachers. Tutorials on how to structure essays to meet the highest grade criteria result in essays and notes of a very high quality. Thorough marking provides detailed guidance for improvement. Teachers use performance data very well to set students targets and to measure their progress.

199. Very good leadership and management produce improving standards and teaching of high quality. There is a clear link between the overall departmental strategy to improve standards and the structures to support it. Thus, the sequencing of topics and themes, and the meticulous planning and organisation of an innovative curriculum make a substantial contribution to the very good quality of teaching and learning. Teachers consult frequently and

regularly with students and keep the provision for history under review. The department is developing the use of ICT and the Internet well to support learning. History makes an effective contribution to the development of students' communication skills. Improvement since the previous inspection is good, both in respect of standards and the overall quality of provision.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

The focus of the inspection was on the AS and A2 courses in design and technology.

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- AS/A2 results in 2003 were above average.
- Very good teaching helps students to achieve well in Years 12 and 13.
- Very good use of ICT has a very positive influence on standards in project work.
- Students have few links with industrial and commercial practice.
- A few students have difficulties with complex construction techniques.

Commentary

200. AS/A2 results in 2003 were above average. They represented broadly satisfactory achievement overall.
201. Standards in current classes in Years 12 and 13 are above average. They represent good achievement, based on students' GCSE results and taking into account students' varied previous experiences within design and technology. Of the 11 students in the A2 class, seven joined the school at the start of Year 12 from other schools. They make similarly good progress to other students and have benefited from very good support and guidance from teachers. Students in both years analyse problems well to innovate and create designs. They do not often take risks when designing so that their work sometimes lacks flair. A few in Year 12 have difficulty in understanding the more complex aspects of construction and materials technology. Students have good skills of working independently. They have very good skills in research as demonstrated in a Year 12 project on the recycling of household waste. Students use ICT to very good effect to develop their work. For example, Year 13 students enhance the presentation of their design folders using very effective three-dimensional, colour designs. Students do not often make industrial visits to extend their experiences and link what they are doing with the commercial world.
202. Very good and stimulating teaching encourages students to be creative and helps students to achieve well. Teaching provides effective support and guidance to fill gaps in their knowledge of those students who did not previously study some aspects of the course. The quality of learning is good. Students are enthusiastic about their courses and respond very positively and purposefully to the good teaching. Students learn well through a mixture of practical project work and taught theory sessions. The balance is appropriate to ensure good continuity of learning. The use of computer-aided design supports well the development of project work. Students are self-motivated and make suitable intellectual, physical and creative efforts in producing their work. Very good relationships between students and staff enable all students to receive high levels of individual tuition. Students value the teaching expertise available.
203. Good leadership and management set high expectations for teaching and for students' achievement. Effective planning of the work and good guidance and support encourage students to persevere. Numbers have increased on the AS course. Although the use of computers has improved significantly, lack of resources for computer-aided manufacturing

along with specialist accommodation limit further developments. Since the previous inspection overall improvement is satisfactory and the department is well placed for further improvement.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The focus of the inspection was on AS/A2 courses in art and design and music.

Work in drama was sampled. The AS drama results were very high in 2003 and represented very good achievement. Students value drama highly because they find it challenging, fun and enriching. The teaching is outstanding. Standards are high in practical work and in critical evaluation of performance and improvisation. Year 12 students, during rehearsals for *The Trial* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, demonstrated excellent skills in planning and performing their drama with an awareness of audience and purpose. They used appropriate dramatic techniques and showed an appreciation of style and convention. The practical sessions held in the drama studio and in the hall represent excellent practice in live performances, so that students present their work to 'real' audiences of their peers and of adults.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are currently very high. Very good teaching helps students to achieve very well.
- Very good leadership and management establish a very clear vision of art education across the whole age range, leading to independent, creative learning in the sixth form.
- Very good one-to-one tuition is supportive yet presents a very high level of challenge, resulting in work of an outstanding quality.

Commentary

204. Achievement in art and design in the sixth form is very good. Students enter the course with well above average attainment and by the end of Year 13 standards attained are outstanding. Work seen is of an excellent standard. It shows an understanding of the creative process that often goes well beyond A-level requirements. Students undertake extensive research into artists' works and experiment with materials and techniques as they explore ways of communicating their views and opinions through their artwork. Finished paintings, sculptures and assemblages, often on a large scale, show high levels of perception applied to very well learned skills from earlier years. The work seen reflects the department's A-level results that have been well above national averages in recent years. AS/A2 results in 2003 were well above average and represented very good achievement overall.
205. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers use their very good breadth of knowledge very effectively in helping students to clarify their thoughts and directing them to appropriate resources, without imposing preconceived ideas. Very good teaching allows students to choose and develop their own themes while closely addressing course requirements. The very high quality of one-to-one tuition and open discussions provide excellent opportunities for ongoing assessment, challenging students to evaluate and justify their own and others' work in progress. Students' excellent attitudes, behaviour and commitment to their work enhance learning.
206. Leadership and management are very good. The leadership's very clear concept of art and design education, across the whole school, comes to fruition in the sixth form in the development of independent, creative students. Staff present a very good example with their knowledgeable and flexible approach to the subject that encourages exploration and innovation in students' work. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. High examination results and standards in work have been maintained.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- AS/A2 results in 2003 were well above average and A2 results represented good achievement.
- Very good teaching, support and guidance promote high standards.
- Excellent extra-curricular activities enable students to practise performing and conducting.
- Excellent accommodation and resources enhance students' learning.

Commentary

207. AS and A2 results in 2003 were well above average for the small number of students involved. Compared with students' performances at GCSE examinations, achievement was satisfactory at AS level and good at A2 level.
208. Currently, standards are very high in work seen in Years 12 and 13 and indicate very good achievement. Students discuss stylistic features confidently and very competently. For example, they quickly identified the main characteristics of a jazz work being studied and of piano techniques and devices deployed in a Schubert song. They discussed these with maturity and perception. Students in Year 13 produce written work of high quality as observed in a very lucid essay considering the differences and similarities between two contrasting pieces of music. Students use ICT very well for research and to develop their work on harmony.
209. Teaching and learning are very good. Very well planned lessons and structured activities cause students to think deeply about the work and to reflect and analyse. Teaching provides intellectual rigour to which students respond very positively and enthusiastically. The very good use of resources supports learning very well. Students receive tasks of suitable challenge and difficulty that motivate them to do well. For example, homework encouraged them to analyse individually a Schubert song as a prelude to studying and analysing two other songs in class. Teachers use probing questions very effectively to draw on and to increase students' knowledge and understanding, as observed when students described features of a jazz work. The excellent accommodation for music and the very good ICT resources provide an outstanding environment for learning and promote students' current very good achievement.
210. Sixth form musicians practise and develop their musical skills and enhance their social development by directing instrumental groups under supervision. For example, they conducted the 'Little Big Band' and the Junior Concert Band very well, showing an excellent understanding of direction and score reading. These activities enhance their analytical skills through class teaching.
211. The very effective acting leadership and management have a suitable focus on raising standards further. Very good planning and organisation of a large number of extra-curricular activities of high quality enrich the learning of students throughout the sixth form. The department enhances students' learning by organising visits to local concerts to extend work covered in the curriculum. Improvement since the previous inspection is good.

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

The focus of the inspection was on physical education courses at AS and A2 levels.

Physical education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- AS/A2 results in 2003 were well above average and indicated very good achievement.
- A wide range of excellent curricular and enrichment opportunities enhances learning.
- Very good teaching and high expectations promote high standards.

Commentary

212. Rates of take-up over the past years have been low, but are currently rising. Retention is good. A2 results in 2003 were well above average for the three students involved and indicated good achievement. AS results were well above average and represented very good achievement for the 14 candidates, based on their prior attainment.
213. Standards in Years 12 and 13 are currently well above average and indicate very good achievement. By Year 13, students have developed their analysis and evaluation of the determinants of skilled performance well. They improve their high-order practical skills further and interpret the effects of historical, social, moral and cultural influences on participation and performance in physical activities.
214. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers use their very good subject expertise to enthuse the students and to give them confidence to tackle practical and theoretical work. Students have highly responsible attitudes towards their work and respond very purposefully to teachers' high expectations and encouragement. They extend their learning considerably through very active and full participation in the excellent provision of enrichment activities. Higher attainers work at an appropriately challenging level because teachers have good knowledge and records of their achievements, in and outside school, and good liaison with coaches.
215. Very good leadership and management have a strong focus on raising standards. Students value the target-setting process based on prior attainment plus a challenge factor, assessed and reviewed frequently to reflect changes. Improvement in provision and standards since the previous inspection is very good. AS and A2 courses have been introduced. Sports college initiatives such as the Community Sports Leader Award and coaching, organising events and mentoring provide students with excellent leadership opportunities.

BUSINESS

This area was not a focus of the inspection. Work was sampled in economics. In the Year 13 lesson observed, students were making very good progress in revision work about factors that influence markets. They applied previous knowledge, for example about economies of scale, to support their work on a supermarket's sales of petrol. Very good teaching gave students confidence to think for themselves. In a Year 12 lesson dealing with exchange rates and the balance of payments, students came to a preliminary conclusion that the free market solution needed all parties to follow the rules. Very good teaching encouraged students to think for themselves and to make very good progress in developing skills of critical analysis.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

This curricular area was not a focus of the inspection.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES

This curricular area was not a focus of the inspection. Work was sampled in personal, social and health education and general studies. In the lessons observed, standards are well above average and achievement very good. Students have very positive attitudes to the work, participate very actively in discussions and acquire a very good understanding of the topics considered, as observed, for example, in a Year 13 general studies lesson on 'Keeping the Peace'.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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