

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **CHRIST'S COLLEGE FINCHLEY**

Finchley, London

LEA area: Barnet

Unique reference number: 101350

Acting Headteacher: Mr G Tucker

Lead inspector: Mr M Pavey

Dates of inspection: 20 - 23 September 2004

Inspection number: 268778

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Comprehensive
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11-18
Gender of pupils:	Male in Years 7-11. Mixed in the sixth form.
Number on roll:	971
School address:	East End Road Finchley London
Postcode:	N2 0SE
Telephone number:	020 8349 3581
Fax number:	020 8349 8972
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr A P Boulton
Date of previous inspection:	1.3.1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This comprehensive school for boys aged 11-18 is in Finchley, North London. There are 751 boys in Years 7-11, and the sixth form of 220 includes 25 girls. Pupils come from a wide range of heritage backgrounds. Around a third are from White backgrounds and a further third from Asian backgrounds. Around one in eight comes from Black backgrounds, and other pupils come from Chinese, mixed or other backgrounds. The percentage of pupils speaking English as an additional language (45 per cent) is very high. The percentage of pupils having special educational needs (SEN) is 20 per cent, above the national average. The percentage of pupils with statements of SEN is three per cent, also above the national average. The percentage of those eligible for free school meals (16 per cent) is around the average.

Pupils come from a wide range of social and economic backgrounds, including the most and least affluent extremes of the range. The school population is relatively settled, with fewer pupils joining after Year 7 than the national average. Pupils' ability on entry, seen in the results of the tests taken at their previous schools and when they arrive at this school, is overall around the national average level.

Since the last inspection, numbers have increased by some 70 pupils and girls have joined the sixth form. The school was awarded Specialist Mathematics and Computing School status in 2003. As part of this status, the school has become a local centre for professional development in mathematics.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
17650	M Pavey	Lead inspector	
9561	H Akhtar	Lay inspector	
1259	J Edge	Team inspector	Science
11975	T McIntosh-Clark	Team inspector	Music
16950	C Orr	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages English as an additional language
19983	H Webb	Team inspector	Design technology
10666	P Wheeler	Team inspector	History Business education in the sixth form
1085	J Laver	Team inspector	Physical education
28878	A Blow	Team inspector	Mathematics
12121	J Mallinson	Team inspector	English
8052	K McKenzie	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Economics in the sixth form
32334	M Groucutt	Team inspector	Special educational needs Politics in the sixth form Work-related learning
30545	D Castell	Team inspector	Geography
33809	S Foxhall	Team inspector	Religious education Citizenship
11258	I Rushforth	Team inspector	Art

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**This rapidly improving school provides a good standard of education.** Leadership from the senior team is very good. Teaching and learning are good and pupils make good progress. The sixth form is cost-effective and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The acting headteacher and the senior team lead very well.
- Results in tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above average and GCSE results were above average.
- Teaching is good at all stages. A large number of lessons seen were very good and some were excellent. Teaching and support given by the coordinator for English as an additional language are very good.
- Results are particularly good in mathematics, history, and art and design, at all levels. Results in business studies are particularly good in the sixth form.
- Relationships are very good at all levels.
- The sixth form is very well led and makes a very positive contribution to the life of the school.
- A good start has been made in developing the school's specialist status for the benefit of the students, the local community and partner schools.
- Further improvement is needed in the assessment of pupils' work.
- Systems for the monitoring and improvement of teaching need further development.
- The curriculum has a number of weaknesses, particularly in the lack of religious education in Years 10-13 and of a daily act of worship for all pupils. These are requirements for all schools.

The school is already planning to improve the three last issues mentioned above.

Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory for the school overall, and good for the sixth form. The school has made satisfactory progress in responding to the key issues raised in the last inspection report.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

*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.*

**All groups of pupils achieve well and make good progress at all stages**, including those with special educational needs, the gifted and talented and those learning English as an additional language. Results in 2003 in the tests at the end of Year 9 were well above average. In GCSE they were above average, while in AS and A2 examinations in the sixth form they were below average.

In English, attainment in 2003 was in line with the national average in tests at the end of Year 9, and improved at this level in 2004. Attainment has been above average in GCSE examinations in recent years. Standards seen in lessons are in line with these results. Literacy skills are in line with nationally expected levels by Year 9, and above by Year 11.

In mathematics, results in the national tests and examinations at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE in 2003 were well above national averages. A significant number of pupils are "fast tracked" and take GCSE in Year 10. In 2003, all these pupils obtained the highest grades. All pupils make good or very good progress. Across the curriculum, pupils are competent in number work, use of formulae and data handling for use in other subject areas.

In science, standards attained in classwork by the ends of Years 9 and 11 are above national averages. Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above average, and results in double award science were just below average. Pupils achieve well, making good progress.

Pupils have good attitudes to school, their work and each other. Their behaviour is good. Relationships are very good. **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.** Attendance is satisfactory.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching is good** and pupils learn well. Teachers' use of assessment is satisfactory. The curriculum is satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are good overall. They are well supported. Teachers involve pupils well, seeking, valuing and acting on their views. The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory and there are good links with other schools and colleges.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The leadership of the school is good. Its management is satisfactory.** The leadership of the acting headteacher is very good. Overall, the leadership of key staff is good and the effectiveness of management is satisfactory. The governance of the school is satisfactory overall, but statutory requirements for providing a daily act of worship and religious education in Years 10-13 have not been met. Leadership and management of the school's specialist work as a mathematics and computing college are very good.

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

Most parents are pleased with the education provided for their children and have confidence in the school. In the well-attended parents' meeting before the inspection, the great majority was positive about the work of the school, but there were many constructive criticisms as well. In the 288 questionnaires returned, a majority was positive, often strongly, about all aspects consulted on. A minority felt that homework was inappropriate, and inspectors confirm it is not always well set and used. A minority felt that the range of activities was restricted. Inspectors found some considerable strengths, for example in sports and the cadet corps. They also found a lack of music, drama and visits to reinforce classroom work.

The school has surveyed the views of pupils and sixth form students, separately from the inspection process. These views are very varied. Inspectors met with groups of pupils and sixth form students at all levels. Their views were very positive. They are proud of their school and pleased to be there.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Further improve the assessment of pupils' work.
- Improve systems for the monitoring and improvement of teaching.
- Rectify a number of weaknesses in the curriculum.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide sufficient religious education in Year 10 and courses in this subject in Years 11-13.
- Provide a daily act of collective worship for all pupils.



## SIXTH FORM SUMMARY REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form provides a good education. Results in the A2 examinations in 2003 were slightly below the national average, representing satisfactory achievement. However, in 2004 40 per cent of candidates obtained A and B grades, a significant improvement on the preceding year. A few students taking AS courses perform less well than should be expected. Overall, however, students achieve well and make good progress. The overall quality of teaching is good, so that students learn well. The sixth form is very well led, and management is good. The sixth form has recently admitted girls, who contribute well to the life of the school. Consistently, a third of each new intake comes from outside the school, reflecting the popularity of its courses. Very few who begin a course fail to finish it. Teachers work hard to value all students, and offer them opportunities for responsibility throughout the school.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good. As a result, achievement is good and standards are rising.
- Students value the support they receive from teachers.
- The sixth form contributes well to the life of the whole school.

### QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	<b>English: good.</b> Standards are close to the national average. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in Year 12, and good in Year 13. Students achieve well. <b>French: satisfactory.</b> Examination results have been at or below national averages. Take-up is low, but teaching and learning seen were both good.
Mathematics	<b>Mathematics: very good.</b> Teaching and learning are both very good. Attainment is well above national averages.
Science	<b>Physics: satisfactory.</b> Attainment is close to the national average. Teaching and learning are both good. <b>Chemistry: satisfactory.</b> Standards have been below the national average. Teaching and learning are both satisfactory.
Information communication technology	<b>ICT: very good.</b> Standards in AS and A2 courses have been around the national average and have shown good improvement. Teaching is very good.
Humanities	<b>History: very good.</b> High standards derive from very good teaching and learning. <b>Geography: good.</b> There were few candidates for AS and A2 examinations in 2003. Standards seen are in line with national averages, but teaching is very good.

**Government and politics: good.** Teaching is very good, learning good. Students enjoy the subject and standards are in line with the national average.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
Visual and performing arts and media	<b>Art: good.</b> Teaching and learning are both good. Numbers taking the course are increasing. Standards are above the national average and are improving.
Business	<b>Business: very good.</b> Standards are well above average. Teaching and learning are very good. Management is excellent. <b>Economics: satisfactory.</b> Results were well below average in 2003. In lessons seen, however, teaching was good and students were achieving well.

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

## CURRICULUM

The sixth form curriculum is good. It offers a wide range of AS and A2 courses, including a number of subjects new at this stage, for example politics, business studies and economics. There is a vocational course in business, but demand for such courses has not been extensive, while pressure to join A-Level groups has been increasing.

The good extra-curricular programmes are particularly helpful for sixth formers, who willingly respond to expectations that they will lead and encourage younger pupils. Sixth formers are invited to start societies as their peers demand. During the inspection, a philosophical society was being formed, and sixth formers took an active part in the recently relaunched school parliament. A well judged programme of visiting speakers provides good personal and social education for sixth formers. Careers advice is good, and students comment positively on the advice they receive about university entry.

Since the last inspection, the school has maintained its satisfactory curriculum in the main school. Improvement in the sixth form curriculum, where courses and numbers have expanded, has been good.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

The sixth form is very well led and well managed. The head of sixth gives confident, well-informed leadership. Under his direction, numbers have grown, results have improved and girls have joined. Management by head of sixth and tutors is good. The head of sixth is already improving the monitoring of students' performance and is introducing a new form of student planner. Important regular routines, for example for the induction of new sixth formers, attendance, monitoring their action plans, and for careers advice, are good. A wide range of activities is provided and sixth formers appreciate the chances they get to help the school and act as mentors to younger pupils.

Since the last inspection, improvement in the sixth form has been good. Numbers have increased, results have improved, and girls have joined.

## STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students' views are overwhelmingly favourable. In nearly all subjects, they say they are well taught. They feel that some teachers could do more to explain what is required in examinations, as they do in history, but in general teachers offer much support and advice. They enjoy lessons, and find the atmosphere in the sixth form congenial. They value the opportunities to act as mentors and take an active role in other parts of the school. They say there is much to do outside lessons, particularly in sport, Duke of Edinburgh's Award, support for charities, and the combined cadet force. Some

students who left the school to join other sixth forms choose to return, and the many others who join from elsewhere are glad they did so.

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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

Results in 2003 in the tests at the end of Year 9 were well above average. In GCSE they were above the average for boys, while in AS and A2 examinations in the sixth form they were below average. At all stages, pupils achieve well, making good progress in their work. All groups of pupils in the main school make good progress, including those with special educational needs, the gifted and talented and those learning English as an additional language.

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

- Results in the national tests taken at age 14 were well above average in 2003.
- Results in mathematics are very high in tests taken at age 14 and in GCSE.
- Pupils achieve well and make good progress in their work at all stages.
- Results in the AS and A2 examinations have been below average in recent years.

#### **Commentary**

1. When pupils join the school, their attainment is in line with the national average. Results in the national test at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above average. Results were somewhat lower in 2004 than 2003.
2. Standards of work seen during the inspection, at an early stage in the school year, were in line with the levels expected nationally. Over their time in Years 7-9, pupils achieve well, making good progress in their work. Pupils from ethnic minorities and those who are gifted or talented and have special needs also make good progress.

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	33.3 (34.7)	33.4(33.3)
mathematics	40.6 (40.0)	35.4 (34.7)
science	36.7 (35.6)	33.6 (33.3)

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

3. In the GCSE examinations at the end of Year 11, results in 2003 were above the national average for boys, in terms of points scored. Over a three-year period to 2003, results for pupils achieving five or more passes at grades A\*-C have been above the national average for boys, with 56 per cent of pupils achieving these grades. Subjects doing particularly well were mathematics and history, while art, French, geography and chemistry also did well. Design and technology and science did less well. In 2004, GCSE results improved considerably, with the pass rate for five or more A\*-C grades now 67 per cent.
4. Standards of work seen during the inspection were above the levels expected nationally, reflecting the good progress pupils have made over their first three years. All groups of pupils continue to achieve well and to make good progress, as in the earlier years.

### **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	54 (55)	52 (50)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	94 (95)	91(91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	95 (99)	96 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	36.6 (38.3)	34.7(34.8)

*There were 145 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

5. In English, attainment in 2003 was in line with the national average in tests at the end of Year 9, and improved at this level in 2004. Attainment has been above average in GCSE examinations in recent years. Standards seen in lessons are in line with these results. Literacy skills are in line with nationally expected levels by Year 9, and above by Year 11. Achievement is good throughout Years 7 to 11. Pupils enter with language skills below the nationally expected level, many having English as a second language. These pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school. All pupils make greater gains in attainment by Year 11 than would be expected from their language skills on entry.
6. In mathematics, results in the national tests and examinations at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE in 2003 were well above national averages. A significant number of pupils are "fast tracked" and take GCSE in Year 10. In 2003, all these pupils obtained the highest grades. All pupils make good or very good progress. Across the curriculum, pupils are competent in number work, use of formulae and data handling for use in other subject areas. The school's work as a Specialist Mathematics and Computing School has a positive effect on pupils' motivation and performance in both these areas. Attainment and progress in ICT are good and improving, partly thanks to the increasingly good facilities which specialist status has provided.
7. In science, standards attained in classwork by the ends of Years 9 and 11 are above national averages. Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were well above average, and results in double award science were just below average. Pupils achieve well, making good progress.
8. No consistent pattern of achievement by boys of different ethnic groups emerges from GCSE results in the last two years. In 2003, pupils of English and Indian backgrounds performed less well than those of Pakistani backgrounds. In 2004, those of Indian background out-performed the English, and those of Caribbean backgrounds performed less well than either.
9. Pupils with special educational needs achieve well and make good progress. They are well supported by their specialist teachers and classroom teachers.
10. Pupils who are learning English as an additional language (EAL) make good progress and achieve as well as others in their class or set. EAL pupils' and students' excellent results in their home languages are a valuable contribution to the school's overall results.
11. Overall, gifted and talented pupils make the same good progress as all others. Their needs are not often well identified and provided for, suggesting that they could make even better progress, with further help. For example, the mathematics department provides very well organised booster classes, leading to very high achievement for gifted mathematicians.

## The sixth form

12. In the sixth form AS and A2 examinations, results have been below the national average in recent years, but rose in 2004. The school calculates the value added to sixth form results in relation to those achieved in GCSE, and these rose from a minus in 2003 to a plus in 2004. Results in the AS examinations have been weaker than in A2. The relatively low performance in sixth form examinations reflects the modest proportion of the ablest students joining the school and the school's generous admissions criteria, now revised, for the sixth form. In A2 examinations in 2003, results were well above average in mathematics and history; above average in art and design, and information technology; they were below average in chemistry, and well below in economics, English language, English literature, and design and technology. In 2004, mathematics results were particularly high, with 90 per cent of candidates gaining grades A or B. On the basis of the national results in 2003, this result is in the top 5 per cent of results nationally.
13. During the inspection, standards of work seen were overall around the nationally expected level. Students made good progress in their lessons and written work, again the result of good teaching and students' positive attitude to learning.

## 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	82.0 (77.5)	89.4 (92.6)
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	25.9 (25.6)	32.6 (35.3)
Average point score per pupil	212.3 (213.7)	258.2 (263.3)

*There were 83 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year*

14. Since the last inspection, previous standards in examination results have been maintained in the tests taken at age 14 and at A-Level. Results have been lower in recent years in GCSE, but have improved markedly in 2004. Good achievement and progress in pupils' daily work have been maintained.

## Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have good attitudes, and behaviour is good. Relationships are very good. Pupils' moral and social development is good overall. Their moral and social development is good, and their spiritual and cultural development satisfactory. Attendance is satisfactory.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' interest and participation in learning activities at the school are good.
- Pupils' moral and social development is well supported.
- Relationships are very good and pupils respect others.
- Behaviour is good, though a small number of pupils have challenging behaviour.
- In the sixth form, relationships and the climate for learning are very good.
- Students like being in the sixth form and take their civic responsibilities very seriously.

## Commentary

15. Overall, pupils behave well. In many lessons, behaviour is exemplary, with pupils willingly engaged in their work and helping to produce a quiet, respectful atmosphere. In class, they are willing to do their best, especially when the work suits their ability and interest, so allowing good learning to take place. In a few instances, pupils are inattentive and cause minor disruption.

This occurs when teachers are less confident in managing their behaviour. Pupils with special educational needs work well with the support staff. Outside lessons, pupils play together happily and socialise in common areas. Little anti-social behaviour, like bullying, was reported. Pupils do not consider it a big problem, and parents report it is well handled when it occurs. The school closely monitors pupils' personal development.



16. Pupils' attitudes are good and relationships between pupils and with staff are very good. Pupils are positive about school life and the opportunities offered to them. They participate keenly in extra-curricular activities, including the sports activities. This, as well as their involvement in the work-related learning activities, extends their experiences and helps them to become independent and self-reliant.
17. Pupils' moral and social development is good. Through the curriculum, pupils learn social skills and moral choices and are encouraged to see the rewards for their efforts and consequences of their wrong doings. Pupils develop right ways to react when frustrated or angered, helped by the well developed personal, health and social education (PHSE) course and by the very good work of the student support centre. In the school parliament, pupils are developing their understanding of democratic processes and their responsibilities. Pupils demonstrate responsibility by working as monitors, helping younger pupils and representing the school in competitive events. Pupils have a good understanding of the difference between right and wrong, even if a small number of them do not act accordingly.
18. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development is satisfactory. Opportunities for reflection and realisation arise in religious education. Once a week, year group assemblies enable pupils to focus on moral issues as well as on belonging to the school community. In other areas of the curriculum, these opportunities can occur, but are not planned. Events like the Black history week and refugee week, thoughtfully organised by the ethnic minority achievement teacher, help raise awareness of cultural diversity. The school sent seven of its Black pupils to a university admissions conference at Oxford this year. This resulted in its winning the school of the year award presented by the National Black Boys Can Association. Some subjects, for example art, food technology and history, also raise pupils' awareness. A good range of clubs and societies caters for many interests. There is a limited programme of concerts, but drama and dance are not provided. There are few opportunities for pupils to enrich their cultural experiences by visiting places of worship.
19. Fixed term exclusions for the year prior to this inspection have increased since the last inspection. These and permanent exclusions are used appropriately when pupils' challenging behaviour or misdeeds become unacceptable. There has been one exclusion so far this academic year. From the table below, exclusions of boys from Caribbean backgrounds were particularly high.

### ***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	273	36	1
White – any other White background	31	6	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	17	3	0
Mixed – White and Black African	10	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	191	3	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	57	4	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	26	8	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	21	11	1
Black or Black British – African	71	6	0

Black or Black British – any other Black background
Any other ethnic group

15
105

1	0
11	1

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

## Attendance

Attendance is satisfactory and most pupils are punctual. Unauthorised absence occurs because of a small number of school refusers and truancy. Authorised absences, mostly due to illness, have increased a little in 2003-04.

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

Authorised absence	
School data:	5.9
National data:	7.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data:	1.1
National data:	1.1

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year i.e. 2002-03.

## The sixth form

20. Students in the sixth form value the opportunities and flexible curriculum offered to them, which enable them to continue their education beyond statutory school age. The rate of retention in sixth form classes is good. Students are particularly positive about the strong relationships that they have with their teachers and with each other, which help them to feel well supported and happy to come to school. Most students are keen to do well, concentrate very well in lessons and try their best. Students' behaviour is very good and they are good role models for the rest of the school. They show initiative and concern about local community matters, lead the charity work of the school, help vulnerable pupils in the main school and are effective prefects. While most attend well, a few have low attendance, and this affects overall levels of attendance.
21. Since the last report, good personal development has continued at all levels, and behaviour has improved. Pupils' moral and social development remains good.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching is good and pupils learn well. Teachers' use of assessment is satisfactory. The curriculum is satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are good overall. They are well supported. Teachers involve pupils well, seeking, valuing and acting on their views. The school's partnership with parents is satisfactory and there are good links with other schools and colleges.

## Teaching and learning

Teaching is good and pupils learn well. Teachers' use of assessment is satisfactory.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a high proportion of good, very good and excellent teaching.
- Teaching is excellent in food technology. In mathematics and sixth form business studies, teaching is very good.
- Teaching for those with special educational needs is good. Support and teaching for those with English as an additional language are very good.

- Teaching is at least satisfactory in all subjects. There are aspects, however, for further improvement, particularly teachers' use of assessment to help pupils make even better progress.

## Commentary

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 145 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7 (5%)	42 (29%)	56 (38%)	33 (23%)	7 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

*The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen. These figures include Year 7-11 and sixth form.*

22. Teaching is good and pupils learn well. Taking Years 7-9 and 10-11 together, six per cent of teaching was excellent, 24 per cent was very good, 39 per cent was good and 25 per cent was satisfactory. Six per cent was unsatisfactory, and most of these lessons were in Years 7-9. Otherwise, there was little difference between the two stages. Because teaching was good, pupils learnt well, making good progress in these years. This is a strong profile, with teaching in nearly a third of lessons very good or excellent, and well over a third good. Good teaching leads to good learning and achievement, and greatly helps to build up the very good relationships and good behaviour which allow teachers and pupils to get on with the business of learning in a positive and productive way.
23. Some excellent teaching was seen. In Years 7-9, two such lessons were seen in citizenship and food technology. In Years 10-11, four excellent lessons were seen – one in each of English and mathematics, and two in food technology. In these lessons, teachers were totally in control of their subjects, knew exactly what would help their pupils learn best, and had the highest expectations of what they could do. Pupils responded in kind, making very rapid, assured and productive gains in their knowledge and skills. Their behaviour was exemplary, because they were fully engaged and had no thought of wasting a minute.
24. Much very good teaching was seen, in many subjects. In these lessons, teachers knew their subjects very well and had prepared very challenging, relevant lessons. Pupils enjoyed their work, and many were clear about their lesson goals and how they intended to reach them. Good teaching was the most often seen quality. It is this competent, effective teaching which makes the school a good place to learn in. In many lessons, teachers set a good pace and taught with knowledge and good humour. Their lessons were imaginative and engaging, so that pupils responded well and made good progress.
25. In satisfactory lessons, teachers had a secure knowledge of their subjects and how to teach them. They communicated lesson aims to their pupils, who knew what to do and achieved satisfactory results. In many such lessons, goals could have been clearer, and the separate parts of the lesson, especially the summing up section at the end, could have been better handled. In some such lessons, the final session lacked convincing content; though enough had been achieved, the progress and knowledge gained were not great enough to generate a clear summary and challenge the pupils on what they had learned.
26. These comments apply, of course, to the few unsatisfactory lessons seen, where a lack of subject knowledge or adequate class management led to unsatisfying and uncompleted tasks. The school has had difficulties in recruiting capable staff in some areas, and some unsatisfactory teaching (but not all) was given by inexperienced or temporary teachers. Teaching in one difficult lower set in Year 9 requires a great deal of skill and determination to achieve a positive result, and to the teachers' credit, only one such lesson in this set was judged unsatisfactory.
27. Teaching of pupils who are learning English as an additional language is very good. The EAL coordinator provides very good support for English teachers and EAL pupils' learning.

However, the EAL support is concentrated in the English department. Because of lack of staffing, it does not extend to the science and mathematics departments, where it is needed.

28. Teaching of pupils with special educational needs by specialist staff is good. They are well informed of their pupils' learning needs, and teach those with statements well. They track the progress of their pupils carefully and monitor their performance from clear initial assessments. Teaching assistants support classroom teachers well. Their effective use is a feature of much good classroom teaching.
29. Though satisfactory overall, the assessment of pupils' work is not generally a strength of teaching. Classroom teachers do not make best use of the assessment data which are given them. Though there are twice-yearly reviews of pupils' performance, targets set are often too general, and so cannot be well followed up. Teachers do not assess performance against potential as clearly as they should. Marking varies in quality; some is excellent, some unsatisfactory. There are examples of first-rate practice in the school, and senior staff are aware that this is now an area for improvement for all teachers.

### **The sixth form**

30. As for classes in the main school, teaching is good and students learn well. At this stage, there is a high proportion of good and very good teaching, and one lesson seen was excellent. Because of this, a minority of lessons was satisfactory, and one unsatisfactory lesson was seen. Teachers have good subject knowledge and give interesting lessons with plenty of challenge and relevance. They set useful assignments and often assess them well. They need, though, to assess the progress of students in Year 12 more effectively, and ensure they are heading for adequate grades in their AS examinations. In 2003, too many students failed to gain grades in these examinations, suggesting that their work had not been rigorously enough assessed during students' first year in the sixth form.
31. Since the last inspection, the good standard of teaching and learning has been maintained, at all levels. The planning of work for pupils with special educational needs has improved considerably. The assessment of pupils' work is now better organised, but needs further improvement.

### **The curriculum**

The curriculum is satisfactory in the main school and good in the sixth form. There are some unsatisfactory features in the curriculum taught in the main school, but there are strengths in particular areas. The school is aware that its overall curriculum is in need of review and improvement.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- In this specialist college for mathematics and computing, the curriculum for mathematics is very good. It is good for ICT.
- There is a good range of courses and activities in the sixth form.
- The curriculum in music and religious education needs improvement. The school does not meet statutory requirements in its provision of RE or for a collective act of daily worship for all pupils.
- Pupils' participation in the arts is limited.
- Provision for pupils who need an alternative to the National Curriculum is in need of development.
- Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education, and for careers guidance, is good also.
- Participation in sport is very good. There is a generous range of activities outside the school day, including a flourishing cadet corps.

## Commentary

32. Overall, the school provides a satisfactory curriculum. It meets the needs of almost all pupils and gives them satisfactory opportunities to progress in their studies and chosen activities. A very positive aspect of the curriculum is the school's status as a mathematics and computing specialist college. This has allowed the school to emphasise two aspects of the curriculum which many parents and pupils consider important, and to improve facilities and extra courses in these areas.
33. The curriculum meets statutory requirements in most respects. However, it is not providing RE for pupils in Years 10-11 and for the sixth form. The allocation of RE and music is not well planned in Years 7-9. The school is not yet providing a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. Both these issues were mentioned in the last inspection report. In addition, there is a number of other issues which need improvement. There is no drama beyond Year 7, where it is well taught in class and has considerable potential for the personal development of pupils. There is not enough time for the common PE programme in Years 10-11. Tutorial time is not well planned or used, so that valuable time is wasted in the best part of the day. These difficulties point to the need to review the whole curriculum, and the school plans to do so.
34. Provision for pupils with special educational needs is good. The appointment of a well informed support assistant to each department means that the needs of each pupil with special needs is clearly communicated to all subjects. In this way, knowledge about each pupil's needs and progress is shared within the department and the pupil benefits from the SEN department's common goals for him. By contrast, the curriculum for gifted and talented pupils is not actively promoted, though there are areas of considerable strength, for example the very good programmes of enrichment given by the mathematics department and the many opportunities for the talented in sports, for example in cricket.
35. The curriculum for pupils aged 14-19 needs further development for those who need an alternative to the National Curriculum. At present, there is a limited vocational element for the curriculum of a few pupils, but a group exists which needs more diversity than this. The student support centre provides very good help for individuals who might otherwise fail to attend school or who can be helped to recover a tolerance of education after a period of absence or rejection. This service is limited by intention, and the needs of the larger group, largely of lower achievers, who attend mainstream classes in Year 10-11 and who get little benefit from this, now need to be met.
36. Personal, social and health education is good, and covers the range of necessary information well. Careers provision is good also. The department is very well organised and makes a positive contribution to the personal development programme. Though work experience was suspended last year, it is planned to start again in 2005.
37. There are strengths and weaknesses in the opportunities beyond the planned teaching timetable. These are satisfactory overall. Participation in sport is very good, with some 50 per cent of pupils joining activities. Opportunities for participation in the arts, however, are unsatisfactory. There are two concerts each year, and very little dramatic production. There is a good range of clubs and societies, but the number of planned visits for subjects is limited. The school's very successful combined cadet corps is a major activity, giving some 85 cadets an enviable range of activities. For example, the corps attended the Arnhem celebrations, with its sponsoring regiment, the Parachute Corps, just before the inspection. There is an active Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme group.
38. Accommodation, despite the extraordinary complexity of the buildings, is satisfactory for the present curriculum. However, rooms are too small to accommodate some classes in the main school, and social areas such as the dining room are under great pressure. Some sixth form rooms are too small for the size of AS classes now expected. The sixth form has grown, and in the absence of a sixth form centre, can take no more. The school has done its best, but

cannot be expected to solve its problems without substantial help. An audit of accommodation is needed, with a focus on social accommodation, provision of enough classrooms of adequate size, and the needs of the sixth form.

39. The school has made significant strides in improving the ICT infrastructure of the school from a fairly low base, in terms of the Pentland Centre, a custom-built ICT teaching space, a mobile ICT classroom, increasing the number of interactive whiteboards, and spreading ICT through the teaching and learning of all subject areas.
40. Resources for learning and the match of support staff to the curriculum are satisfactory. The match of teachers to the curriculum is good. There are specialists in every subject, and this has a positive effect on standards. Provision for English as an additional language is very good, but staffing is not extensive enough. Support is therefore concentrated in the English department. It is very effective there, but there are no formal arrangements for support in other subjects.

### **The sixth form**

41. The sixth form curriculum is good. It offers a wide range of AS and A2 courses, including a number of subjects new at this stage, for example politics, business studies and economics. There is a vocational course in business, but demand for such courses has not been extensive, while pressure to join A-Level groups has been increasing.
42. The extra-curricular programmes described above are particularly helpful for sixth formers, who willingly respond to expectations that they will lead and encourage younger pupils. Sixth formers are invited to start societies as their peers demand. During the inspection, a philosophical society was being formed, and sixth formers took an active part in the recently relaunched school parliament. A well judged programme of visiting speakers provides good personal and social education for sixth formers. Careers advice is good, and students comment positively on the advice they receive about university entry.
43. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained its satisfactory curriculum in the main school. Improvement in the sixth form curriculum, where courses and numbers have expanded, has been good.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The school's provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is good overall. They are warmly supported. Advice and guidance for pupils in how to improve their performance are satisfactory. Teachers involve pupils well, seeking, valuing and acting on their views.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school warmly helps and cares for pupils of all backgrounds.
- Pupils and parents appreciate the pastoral care provided.
- The monitoring of health and safety is good.
- Sixth form teachers and the head of sixth form know their students' needs well.
- Sixth formers value the support and advice they receive.

### **Commentary**

44. Admission arrangements are effective and pupils appreciate how well staff, including the ethnic minorities achievement teacher, have helped them to settle in. The pastoral support system, including the student support centre and the welfare officer, is well organised and ensures that all pupils' development is monitored. Pupils say that staff care for them, are easy to speak to and take time to explain things that they do not understand. Pupils are clear that their views are

valued and heard and that staff listen to them well. Pupils are provided with good advice and guidance about matters related to their health and welfare and when making choices about future careers or deciding on appropriate sixth form education.

45. There is good awareness of procedures for child protection and for supporting pupils in public care. Procedures to ensure the safety and security of pupils and staff are in place. The school uses outside support agencies effectively to provide appropriate support for pupils. However, the level of in-house support for pupils at an early stage of acquiring the English language does not sufficiently match these pupils' needs.
46. The policy for assessment and monitoring is satisfactory and soundly used. Every pupil new to the school is assessed, his learning needs identified and his future performance is predicted. The school has very recently started using tracking data to set targets for individual pupils. Though the system is well established, monitoring of pupils' progress against the set targets needs further development. The quality of written advice given in the twice-yearly target reviews does not yet give pupils a clear idea of how to improve. The system of logging concerns and sanctions provides a deterrent for any oppressive behaviour like bullying. Vulnerable pupils are well supported and their progress is well monitored.
47. Pupils are regularly asked for their views and opinions on the school's work, through survey and pupil parliaments, for example. As a result, pupils feel valued and well cared for.

### **The sixth form**

48. The provision of support, advice and guidance for sixth form students is good. Students have ample opportunities to express their views, which the school values. Teachers know their students well and are sensitive to their personal circumstances. Students are positive about the sixth form. They are well supported both in academic and personal matters by their teachers and are given good guidance on higher education, careers and work options after they leave school. The system for assessing, monitoring and reporting students' progress works well.
49. The good levels of care reported in 1999 have been well maintained. The monitoring of pupils' academic progress, then reported as good, is now judged satisfactory.

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

Links with parents are satisfactory. Links with the community, other schools and colleges are good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents have confidence in the school. Communication with parents is good.
- The school uses its opportunities to develop links with the community well.
- There are good educational links with other schools and institutions, particularly as a result of its initiatives as a Specialist Mathematics and Computing School.
- Parents appreciate the sixth form provision and the progress made by their children.

### **Commentary**

50. Most parents are pleased with the education provided for their children. The school tries to encourage them to be more involved in their children's education and most parents respond well to this by helping with homework and attending reviews and meetings. Parents have been frequently consulted, for example on the specialist status of the school. The school can generally rely on parents' support in dealing with problems related to their children's learning and development. The Parents and Friends, the PTA, is an active body and holds social events and raises considerable funds for the school.



51. The school prospectus and the governors' annual reports are informative and meet requirements. Pupils' annual progress reports to parents contain details of what pupils have been doing in curriculum subjects, but do not adequately inform the parents of what pupils should have been doing, particularly with reference to the National Curriculum levels, or what they can do to raise their children's achievement. Targets set at the review days are hardly subject specific. Parents are kept informed about their children's performance in work-related learning activities. Some parents would welcome better two-way communication through the diaries.
52. The school makes productive use of its community links and partnerships with other schools and colleges. These enrich the curriculum, support smooth transition to and from the school and provide staff with opportunities to share and develop good practice. The school actively develops these links, so giving pupils a wide range of interesting learning experiences, such as the vocational courses which are well supported by employers. Some pupils benefit from exchange visits with European partner schools.
53. The school's status as a Specialist Mathematics and Computing School has encouraged links with partner primary schools and the community, which have further enhanced the school's reputation. Examples are the visits of primary school children to the school to use the ICT facilities and the provision of equipment and training for teachers. Within the community, the school has taken its specialist role seriously. It has established links with a local adult institute, set up weekend parent classes, supported basic skills classes and extended links with local universities to broaden student access and support initial teacher training.

### **Sixth form**

54. Parents and students are generally satisfied with the sixth form. The helpful partnership with parents continues to support students' work as they study in the sixth form. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress through tutor reviews and consultation meetings. As in the main school, there are many links with the community which support students, their development and the curriculum. There are useful links with businesses to support career choices.
55. Since the last inspection, the school has maintained the quality of its links with parents and the community. Parents are largely satisfied with the work of the school and their relationships with it.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership of the school is good. Its management is satisfactory. The leadership of the acting headteacher is very good. Overall, the leadership of key staff is good and the effectiveness of management is satisfactory. The governance of the school is satisfactory overall. Leadership and management of the school's specialist work as a mathematics and computing college is very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The acting headteacher and his senior team give very good leadership. They have the capacity further to improve the school, and have already begun to do so.
- Governors give good leadership in many ways, but have not ensured that all statutory requirements have been met.
- Senior staff work well with all colleagues to provide very good role models for their pupils, and so make the school an inclusive and friendly community.
- Staff performance management, and procedures for monitoring and improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning, and the school curriculum, need further improvement.

- Leadership and management of the school's specialist activities are well informed, active and successful.

### **Commentary**

56. Governors lead the school well in almost every way. They know the school well and have positively helped to shape its vision by leading it into its present status as a specialist college and by seeking to strengthen the sixth form, for example in the admission of girls. They understand the school's strengths and weaknesses, for example through their close cooperation with senior staff in the work of governors' committees and their scrutiny of the improvement plan. They challenge senior staff well, asking shrewd questions of the leadership team, for example about the financial position and how to improve it. However, they have not ensured that statutory requirements are met in the provision of religious education in Years 10-13, or that the school provides a daily act of collective worship for all pupils. These were issues in the last inspection report and have not been acted on. The acting headteacher, who took over shortly before this inspection visit, has already prepared a plan to provide religious education as from September 2005 and is aware of how a daily act of worship can be provided for all pupils.
57. The acting headteacher and his senior team lead very well. The acting headteacher has very recently taken on this role, and has ably reorganised the senior team to cover all aspects of senior leadership. Together, senior staff have a very good sense of purpose, and share high aspirations for the school. For example, they have jointly compiled a new improvement plan, have refined its priorities, and have published very good plans for the improvement of teaching and learning, and assessment. Under this team, prospects for further improvement are good. Staff are pleased that it has taken over so positively, and are now working together with good common purpose.
58. Overall, heads of department lead well. Leadership of mathematics is excellent and that of history and English as an additional language very good. Leadership in some departments, for example science, design and technology, modern languages and music, though satisfactory, needs further attention, particularly in how leaders can inspire all staff to give of their best in united, purposeful teams. Leadership of the heads of year is satisfactory. Again, more attention is needed to developing tutor teams working together to promote high standards.
59. Senior staff and all their colleagues provide very good role models for the pupils of this successfully multi-cultural school. Leaders and staff relate very well to each other, and this good atmosphere communicates itself very well to the pupils, who make a harmonious, thoughtful and caring community. Leaders have a good commitment to the inclusion of all pupils – in lessons, activities and the social life of the school. For example, they have provided good support for pupils with special educational needs. However, there is a shortage of trained teachers and support staff for the large number of pupils who have English as an additional language. There is a very good curriculum support service, giving invaluable help to those who might be excluded or exclude themselves from school. The mathematics department provides an outstanding example of how gifted mathematicians can develop their skills, while opportunities for the talented in sport are very good. The leadership of inclusion, overall, needs more development, to help all areas reach such high standards.
60. Development of the school's specialist status as a mathematics and computing school has been careful and effective. A wide range of key initiatives has included creating greater access to ICT, improving equipment, training for staff, broadening the curriculum and extending partnerships with business and local schools.
61. Management in the main school is satisfactory at present. The new senior team, at the time of the inspection, had been just two weeks in post, and their initiatives will take time to develop. The sole key issue at present is to convert the very good vision now shown by the school's leadership into well managed and effective programmes for the management of teachers'

assessment of pupils' work, teachers' professional performance and the overall quality of the curriculum.

62. Management of assessment is satisfactory. Good baseline data are assembled and targets well set for grades in tests and examinations. Not all teachers, though, are marking work with clear enough reference to these targets, and are not telling pupils specific ways to improve their work, in order to reach or exceed their targets. Targets are not therefore being reviewed on the basis of clear information about achievement, and the school cannot accurately say whether a given year is performing as highly as it could. This issue becomes significant in the light of pupils' modest performance in recent GCSE and A-Level examinations, compared with their achievement in their tests taken at age 14.
63. The school's current procedures for the monitoring and improvement of teachers' performance are dutiful, but unconvincing. The local authority has provided good monitoring, and has worked effectively with the school in bringing in the new strategy for teaching in Years 7-9. However, regular monitoring in departments and in the school's performance management system has been more mechanical than motivational – many sheets adorned with ticks and without evidence of important issues followed up or training provided. Raising the quality of everyone's teaching to the level of the best will have a huge effect on the performance of several departments.
64. The management of the curriculum has not been active enough. There are too many awkward arrangements and omissions. The timetable is not well written at present and the daily issue of the use of tutorial and assembly time has not been solved. A review is needed, followed by clear procedures for assessing the quality of the overall curriculum and for deciding how change is to be managed. At the moment, various changes have been made without reference to overall quality.
65. There are good programmes for the induction of new staff and for the management of initial teacher training (ITT). The school works with three ITT partners and provides its students with good experience and support. The management of the curriculum support department is good and improving. Policies are clear and interventions to help individuals are effective. English as an additional language, and student support to prevent exclusion, are two very well managed areas of the school's work. The premises manager and her staff work well to ensure that the buildings are in as good a state as possible, and have improved several areas. Staff in the school office manage daily routines very well, and parents greatly appreciate their contribution.
66. Management of the school's provision for special educational needs and inclusion is good. Management by the coordinator of the English as an additional language is very good, but there is a great shortage in support equipment and in clerical help in this area.
67. Financial management is satisfactory overall. The bursar has a very good grasp of all the issues and has greatly improved the school's systems, which are now comprehensive and clear. However, the school has not yet rectified its staffing ratios, which are too generous to be sustained in the future. The size of many classrooms makes it difficult to provide an economical number of teaching sets in Years 7-11 and limits the size of sixth form classes. The issue of staffing ratios is therefore more complex than simple lack of management. Nevertheless, for this reason, value for money, which is good in many respects, is no more than satisfactory at present. The school makes good use of the grants it receives from central government. Lettings are well managed and the parents association provides very welcome income for the purchase of extra equipment.

## **Financial information**

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

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	4105746
Total expenditure	3956461
Expenditure per pupil	4091

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	95004
Balance carried forward to the next	244289

68. The school has had difficulties in recruiting and retaining good staff in several areas, particularly science.

### **The sixth form**

69. The sixth form is very well led and well managed. The head of sixth gives confident, well-informed leadership. Under his direction, numbers have grown, results have improved and girls have joined. Management by head of sixth and tutors is good. The head of sixth is already improving the monitoring of students' performance and is introducing a new form of student planner. Important regular routines, for example for the induction of new sixth formers, attendance, monitoring their action plans, and for careers advice, are good. A wide range of activities is provided and sixth formers appreciate the chances they get to help the school and act as mentors to younger pupils. The sixth form budget is well calculated, and income is somewhat greater than direct expenditure. The sixth form represents satisfactory value for money.
70. Since the last inspection, the school has made good improvement in the quality of its leadership, and satisfactory improvement in its management. Improvement in the sixth form has been good; numbers have increased, results have improved, and girls have joined.

### **Work-related learning**

Provision in work-related learning is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Careers education begins in Year 7. There is a clear framework for work-related learning in Years 10-11.
- European work experience for sixth formers is outstanding.
- The school has good plans to extend the subject to several areas of the curriculum.
- Senior staff are strongly committed to the successful introduction of this new programme.
- Links with outside organisations are very good.

### **Commentary**

71. The opportunity to benefit from work experience has been a feature of school life for some time, being described as "outstanding" at the time of the last inspection. Since then the provision has been variable as a result of financial problems, which unfortunately meant that the whole provision was abandoned last year. However, it has now returned with a commitment that it will again be regarded as an important element of school life, and with careers education being introduced from Year 7. Some elements, such as the opportunity for sixth form students to benefit from European work experience, provide students a tremendous opportunity.
72. The new Key Stage 4 statutory requirement to provide a programme of work-related learning has been addressed in a detailed way. There is a clear rationale and statement of how the

new requirement will be met. This includes procedures to ensure that there is effective monitoring and evaluation so that the nine-point official framework will be met, with the opportunity of external verification of pupils' achievements through a vocational awards scheme.

73. The programme will be given by a range of events and by subjects including careers, PSE and citizenship. The school is looking to expand and further develop the programme, for example through the mini-enterprise scheme, or by existing subject areas, such as history, undertaking an assignment on the history of working practices. The planning of experience for pupils of differing levels of ability is being taken into account. Some pupils will be selected for an extended work experience programme as part of a specially devised work-related programme to meet the needs of individuals.
74. Work-related learning is impressive for several reasons. A very detailed set of documentation reflects considerable planning for this subject. Clear efforts have been made to ensure that there will be a genuine cross-curricular element in the programme. The subject has clear support from senior management. The thoroughly developed scheme ensures close links with the local Education Business Partnership, Project Trident and Connexions. Good liaison with local employers provides useful work placements. There are programmes of study covering careers education right through the school from Year 7, with a clear vision of how the learning objectives will be achieved.
75. The contribution of the teacher who has undertaken much of the development work for this programme has been pivotal and reflects a real commitment to excellence. The acting headteacher and head of sixth form are fully involved in introducing the new statutory requirement. This is a testimony to the genuine commitment to work-related learning in this school.

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

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

#### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

##### **English**

Provision in English is **good**.

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

- Good leadership has helped to create a strong team spirit among the teachers.
- Teaching is good overall, and engenders very good attitudes among pupils.
- Teachers have recorded detailed data on pupils' progress, but do not make sufficient use of it.

##### **Commentary**

76. Attainment in 2003 was in line with the national average in tests at the end of Year 9, and improved at this level in 2004. GCSE results have been consistently above the national average for boys, with the school's best results occurring in 2004. These results are well above those for similar schools. Within the school they are better than those in science, but below those in mathematics.
77. Standards seen in lessons are in line with these results. Work is copious. Literacy skills are in line with nationally expected levels by Year 9, and above by Year 11. Pupils study a wide range of literature and criticise it perceptively. Emphasis is given to poetry. Pupils use ICT effectively to make attractive display. They speak fluently, and benefit from role play. Some read widely, but there is no policy for extending the frequency of reading.
78. Achievement is good throughout Years 7 to 11. Pupils enter with language skills below nationally expected levels, many having English as a second language. These pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress throughout the school. All pupils make greater gains in attainment by Year 11 than would be expected from their language skills on entry.
79. Teaching is satisfactory in Years 7 to 9, and very good in Years 10 to 11. Teachers create productive relationships with pupils whose attitudes are accordingly very good. Teachers know the subject well, communicate it with enthusiasm, and with a variety of teaching methods. Lessons are well planned, and work is well marked. Mistakes are corrected, comments are helpful, and National Curriculum levels given. Challenge is usually high, though in some lessons in Years 8 and 9 the work seen was too easy. Teachers encourage pupils to speak, but do not sufficiently show them how to improve.
80. Learning is accordingly at least satisfactory in nearly all lessons, and often good or very good. Pupils work well because they enjoy the lessons, they know what to do and get helpful feedback. In the best lessons they are learning from each other.
81. Leadership and management are good. The newly appointed head of department has provided schemes of work and organised resources. She has created a strong team of teachers who share ideas but have not had opportunities for observing each other's lessons. She has a clear vision of what now needs doing. Assessment needs attention. All teachers are aware of pupils' previous attainment but they need to use the data more analytically to track pupils and set targets.

82. There are separate drama lessons in Year 7, but in other years it is taught within the English department, and taught very well. But due to the absence of a separate department pupils lack an important area of experience.
83. The department has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Standards fell between 2001 and 2003, but have now risen to the previous level, particularly in test results at the end of Year 9.

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

84. Standards of many pupils entering the school are below the national average, but are above by the end of Year 9. Standards of speaking and listening are above the average.
85. The school has provided training for staff in the teaching of literacy, but there is no coordinator, and no cross-school programme for improving literacy. As a result each department decides on the importance it will give to literacy, and the strategies they use vary considerably. There is good practice in many departments, but generally too little attention is given to reading. Pupils would benefit from a whole-school policy to provide such regular reading opportunities.
86. Library staff are conscientious and committed, but the provision is unsatisfactory. The library is open for too few hours in the day. Books need sorting, with greater encouragement for pupils to borrow books. The library's computer is unable to audit loan rates. The school needs to decide on the library's role and provide it with clear and vigorous line management.

### **French and German**

Provision in French and German is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCSE results are consistently above average.
- Most pupils behave very well and achieve well.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good overall.
- Assessment and the use of government initiatives for teaching Years 7-9 are underdeveloped.
- The departmental handbook lacks essential documents.
- There is little observation of teaching.

### **Commentary**

87. In 2003 French results were well above average and pupils achieved well. German results for a group of lower attaining pupils were below average, but pupils achieved well in relation to their prior attainment. In 2004 the unvalidated results showed a slight decline. Over the last three years, overall, results have been consistently above average, particularly in French.
88. Standards in the current Year 9 are above average overall and pupils achieve well. Pupils with special educational needs or who are learning English as an additional language achieve as well as others in their class and are supported effectively. The main characteristics of pupils' good performance are very good behaviour and careful listening in lessons. As a result, they learn effectively and many develop good pronunciation and listening skills. The high number of bilingual teachers contributes positively to this picture. By Year 9, higher attainers understand the past tense well. However, a small number of low-attaining pupils in this year behave badly, lose concentration and achieve less well. In Year 7, pupils are not required early enough to write at length, especially in French. Overall, pupils are not always as clear as they should be in their own minds about how to make progress from level to level.

89. Standards in Year 11 are above average overall and pupils achieve well. Pupils have positive attitudes to their examination work and work purposefully. They complete their written coursework carefully with good guidance from their teachers. Many pupils are willing to guess at the meaning of unfamiliar words and take part readily in short dialogues. However, a minority is reluctant to speak and participate in class. Standards of writing in exercise books are sometimes lower than they should be, partly because there is insufficient redrafting of corrected work.
90. Teaching is good overall and pupils learn well as a result. The strengths of most teachers are their good control of behaviour, their encouragement of pupils and their high expectations that pupils will behave and perform well. A small minority of teachers does not have such good control of behaviour. Not all teachers implement fully the requirements of the Key Stage 3 Strategy in Years 7 and 8. Starter activities are sometimes too long and learning tasks lack the structure required for pupils to make progress. Teachers vary in the marking they do, and in the amount and length of written work they require of their pupils.
91. The leadership and management of the department are satisfactory. The team of teachers is highly committed and works well together. The display in the language corridor and most classes creates a good language-learning environment. Day-to-day management of the department is sound. Areas for improvement include: a programme of lesson observation; further implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy; better use of National Curriculum levels; and a revision of the departmental handbook. Former very successful study visits to France and Germany have temporarily lapsed.
92. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Standards have been maintained.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths**

- The excellent leadership of the head of department is significant in generating high standards.
- The very high expectations and very good subject knowledge of all mathematics teachers contribute to very good teaching.
- The pupil assessment and tracking system gives detailed attention to each pupil's progress and needs.
- The detailed collaborative planning of schemes of work and lessons contributes to very good teaching.

### **Commentary**

93. In 2003 at the end of Year 9 pupils attained well above the national average in national tests at both Level 5 and above, and Level 6 and above, compared to all schools. When compared to similar schools and against pupils' prior attainment, these outcomes placed the school in the top 5 per cent of schools nationally.
94. At the end of Year 11, the proportion of pupils obtaining the top A\*-C grades in mathematics was well above the national average and placed the school in the top quarter of all schools. A very high proportion of pupils obtain a GCSE grade in mathematics. A significant number of pupils are "fast tracked" and take GCSE in Year 10. In 2003, all these pupils obtained the highest grades.
95. All pupils make excellent or very good progress, including those who enter the school with attainment at or below Level 3 of the National Curriculum. The outcomes in 2004 show the continuation of an upward trend at both key stages.



96. The standards of work seen in lessons and pupils' work reflect their attainment in national tests and examinations. All pupils' mathematical skills are very well developed and the "fast track" group in Year 11 can use differentiation to find gradients of curves. All the work seen was very well presented and copious, with care taken over diagrams. All pupils work in pencil and this makes a strong contribution to the good appearance of work. Pupils take a pride in their work.
97. Teaching is very good overall. In all lessons seen, teaching was at least satisfactory, was frequently good or very good, and some was excellent. Pupils' work seen proves the quality of teaching over time to be very good, with consistent very high levels of challenge in the level and quantity of work done. Marking is thorough and helpful to pupils.
98. Where teaching is good there is good use of questions and electronic teaching aids, and very good relationships. All teachers use the government initiatives for teaching pupils in Years 7-9, direct teaching, and individual work in their teaching. Group discussion was less widely seen and learning would benefit if this were used more, especially with the most able groups. All teachers have excellent subject knowledge and plan their lessons together. They frequently refer to, and build upon, prior knowledge and have very high expectations. These factors contribute to the rapid learning seen in the older pupils. Booster, additional classes and learning opportunities are provided throughout all years. These are well used and contribute well to pupils' progress. Opportunities to use computers in mathematics are limited at present.
99. The inspirational leadership of the head of department is very significant in the success of the department. He sets very high personal targets and helps his team very well to aspire to similar standards. Very good departmental assessment and monitoring systems are effectively used to track pupils and make regular adjustments to the teaching groups. The school makes a major contribution to mathematics education outside the school and this will be extended in its role as a Specialist Mathematics and Computing School.
100. Since the last inspection attainment, teaching and planning have all improved.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

101. Pupils are competent in number work, thanks to the work of the mathematics department. They use formulae and data handling well in other subject areas. In art and design, pupils are able to use scale, proportion, perspective and enlargement. In geography, pupils use appropriate statistical tools to describe and analyse data. A coordinated approach to the use of mathematics across the school is only just being established. Various guides have been written but have not yet been introduced across the school.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Attainment and achievement are good.
- Teaching and learning are good overall, though better for Years 7, 8 and 9 than for Years 10 and 11.
- The work of leaders and managers is not sufficiently coordinated, for example over assessment schedules and setting targets for improvement.

## Commentary

102. The standards attained by the ends of Years 9 and 11 are above national averages. Standards in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 are well above average, including a higher than average per cent attaining Level 7 and above. Year 11 science results derive from five types of science GCSE. In 2003, pupils studying three separate GCSE sciences attained better than the national average and almost all attained grades C or above; only two pupils left with no graded award at science GCSE. Most pupils study double award GCSE science. In 2003, their results were marginally below average. In 2004 the unvalidated results for GCSE show a considerably higher proportion attaining grades C and above for double award GCSE. Results for the other GCSE sciences remain as high in 2004 as they were in 2003. Standards during the inspection, held in the second week of the new school year, are already in line with nationally expected levels, for both key stages.
103. Achievement is good overall, in both top and lower sets. By the end of Year 9 in 2003, pupils improved their attainment better than the average improvement for all pupils. During Years 10 and 11, further value is added, to a better than average extent. The achievements of pupils with special educational need are good. Pupils with English as an additional language achieve well. Achievement is more secure for Years 7, 8 and 9 than it is for Years 10 and 11.
104. Teaching and learning are overall both good. There is little unsatisfactory teaching and learning in any age group. The quality of teaching is clearly good for Years 8 and 9. Teaching and learning seen in Years 10 and 11 are overall satisfactory, a mix of mostly satisfactory plus some good practice. At this stage, learners are generally less willing to give of their best, and do not reliably work independently. Teachers of these years do not consistently set hard enough work for high-attaining pupils and sometimes allow pupils to slacken or wander too much. In Years 8 and 9, lessons are well structured, with plenty of variety, and taught at a good pace. Pupils work steadily and productively.
105. Several factors influence standards. The guidance given to teachers in the good schemes of work for Years 7, 8 and 9 is precise, detailed and well-structured. Schemes for Years 10 and 11 are satisfactory, but lack detail, for example of work to meet the needs of high-attaining pupils. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory and have maintained standards well during a period of staff upheaval. Even so, the current plan for improvement is not clear about key areas known to require attention. In part, this reflects a lack of coordination amongst the several managers and the head of science. An example of this is the under-use of assessment data for monitoring and then improving provision, especially for Years 10 and 11. Deficiencies in accommodation, soon to be made good, hinder practical work.
106. The department has broadly maintained the standards and provision recorded in the previous inspection.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been a very significant improvement in the level and quality of resources recently, providing better access to the ICT curriculum.
- All students have timetabled ICT lessons.
- All students in Years 10 and 11 follow a GCSE course in ICT.
- Teaching in ICT lessons is good overall and often very good.
- The management of ICT is very effective.

- Some subject departments are not yet taking full advantage of increased ICT resources and the improving ICT skills of pupils, when planning their schemes of work.

## **Commentary**

107. Overall, standards in ICT by age 14 are consistent with nationally expected levels. The current work of students in Years 7 to 9 indicates that they are achieving well and making good progress. Standards are continuing to improve in activities based upon the National Strategy for ICT. In Years 10 and 11, all students now follow a short course in GCSE and the full course is also available. There have been no results in this course yet, but pupils have achieved well in their lessons and work seen in its first year. In work seen, standards are at least average overall and above average in higher sets. Assessment is appropriate and special needs, including language issues, are recognised and catered for effectively.
108. Teaching is good overall and much very good teaching was seen in all years. There is a mixture of well-established and newer members of staff. The department, which is very well led and managed, provides a collaborative, supportive working environment for staff. This in turn has a positive impact upon students' experiences in ICT. The effective use of interactive whiteboards is a good feature of teaching and learning. The level of resources is good and improving. The nature of accommodation for ICT lessons is more variable. Some excellent new accommodation is now in use, but some older rooms can make ICT teaching more difficult.
109. The rapid expansion of ICT resources throughout the school is straining the capacity of the network server and can delay the start of some lessons. There has been a very significant improvement in all aspects of the work of the ICT department since the last inspection and it has the capacity and necessary organisational and management skills to continue to improve standards.

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

110. The use of ICT across the curriculum has improved since the last inspection, notably in the past year. Many teachers are now more confident and competent in their use of computers and interactive whiteboards. A significant number of classrooms have been equipped with interactive boards with Internet access. Some subject departments are making very effective use of these in whole-class teaching. In some cases, there is scope for more direct pupil involvement in the use of this technology to make the whole-class session properly interactive. Because of the large number of timetabled ICT lessons in all years, access to ICT rooms can be limited at times. However, with increasing resources, including portable computers, there is scope for the further use of computers for the enhancement of teaching and learning. The science, design technology and music departments are not yet making enough use of the ICT resources for their subjects. Arrangements for the planning and coordination of ICT across the curriculum are not yet thorough enough.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- GCSE results have risen over the last three years and are well above the national average.
- Very good teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 lead to very good achievement.
- Good leadership is supporting temporary teachers.
- Unsatisfactory accommodation affects the quality of teaching in some classes.



## Commentary

111. GCSE results in 2003 were well above the national average. They improved further in 2004 so that three-quarters of pupils attained grades A\* to C and about two-fifths attained grades A\* or A; the teaching in Years 10 and 11 provides a good challenge for the most able pupils.
112. The standard of work seen in Years 7 to 9 was in line with nationally expected levels. The achievement of pupils in these years in lessons was overall satisfactory, but ranged from very good in one Year 7 lesson in which the teacher exercised firm control, to unsatisfactory when the poor behaviour of small groups of pupils limited the progress of the class. Achievement in all Year 10 and 11 lessons was very good and confirms the progress made towards GCSE in these years. Some of the GCSE coursework involving river studies on Loughton Brook and land use analysis in St Albans was of a standard not usually seen until A-Level, reflecting the pupils' capacity for independent study as well as the teachers' ambitious planning. There is no difference in the achievement of different groups of pupils.
113. Due to recent reorganisation of responsibilities in the school and long-term illness, all classes in Years 7 to 9 except one, which was not observed, are taught by temporary teachers. In these years, the quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory overall, but varied from very good to unsatisfactory in one lesson. Teaching and learning in Years 10 and 11 are very good. In all years, teachers plan to include a range of activities within the lesson and make effective use of starter activities to raise interest, which they sustain by maintaining a brisk pace. Pupils are encouraged to discuss their work with each other. They work very effectively in groups, for example in analysing a model of population change in a Year 10 lesson seen. All teachers have a very good understanding of individual pupils' needs and support them well in class. Marking is helpful and some very good assessment practice is now being included in schemes of work. The subject makes a good contribution to developing pupils' literacy and makes good use of their numerical, graphical and ICT skills.
114. The limited number of specialist geography rooms and the current timetable arrangements mean that both teachers and classes move around too many different rooms, which has an impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Much better use could be made of display space.
115. Leadership and management are good. Teachers are deployed appropriately during the present staffing difficulties and very good support is given to the two temporary teachers. The department has developed a much wider range of teaching and learning activities in the past two years, although the amount and variety of fieldwork is limited, especially in Years 7 to 9. Although geography is a popular option in Year 10, and despite its success at GCSE, the number choosing to study it in the sixth form is small. Provision of more enrichment activities in all years would add to its attraction. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection is good.

## History

Provision in history is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results (2003) were well above national averages and achievement was very good due to the very good teaching on the course.
- Leadership and management of the department are very good and have provided stability, allowing excellent improvement since the last inspection.
- Assessment is very well done.
- Boys have a good attitude to their work and the numbers who opt to continue their studies to GCSE are increasing.

- There is a shortage of accommodation.
- There are limited opportunities for enrichment activities.

## Commentary

116. Year 9 teacher assessments were above national averages, an improvement since the last inspection. GCSE results in 2003 were well above national averages. Standards were maintained in 2004, though the number of higher grades fell slightly. Entry numbers rose by a quarter in 2004, reflecting the popularity of the subject. In both Years 9 and 11, pupils' achievement and progress, in relation to their attainment at the start of the stage, were very good.
117. Achievement by pupils over their time between Years 7-9 is good and standards exceed national averages by Year 9. However, current Year 8 pupils made less progress than those in other years because of difficulties in staffing. The majority of classes in Year 7 without a permanent history teacher for most of that year, and this had a direct effect on standards. This situation has now been remedied. By Year 9, the majority of boys can carry out research using a variety of sources, including the Internet. They have learned how to evaluate evidence and can write extensively, using appropriate historical vocabulary. Higher attaining pupils can write critically, analysing the reasons for change, as seen in essays on life during World War 2. Overall, boys have a good knowledge and understanding of the topics they have studied. Standards in the current Year 11 are well above national averages and boys achieve very well. They are highly motivated and demonstrate a willingness fully to participate in lessons, making good contributions to oral discussions. They show that they have acquired a detailed knowledge and understanding of historical topics and have developed good analytical skills, both in the evaluation of sources of evidence and in their written work.
118. The quality of teaching and learning is good - very good at GCSE. Lessons are very well planned and have a clear structure. Relationships in the classroom are excellent and underpin the very good management of behaviour. Boys respond well to the stimulating and consistently challenging teaching. Lower attaining pupils and those with special educational needs, are well supported, whilst gifted and talented pupils are appropriately extended. Marking and assessment are very thorough; pupils know how well they are doing and are clear about what they need to do to improve their work. However, there are few opportunities for history field trips, which would do much to enrich the curriculum.
119. Leadership and management of the department are very good. The incoming head of department, who has been in post for two weeks, has inherited a department where management structures and systems are fully in place. Monitoring and evaluation of teaching, learning and the curriculum are ongoing. There has been excellent improvement since the last inspection. Standards and achievement have improved and a genuine interest in history has emerged over the past three years. However this increasing interest has put pressure on accommodation. This puts unnecessary pressure on teachers.

## Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Statutory requirements are not met in Years 10 and 11, as not enough curriculum time is allocated to the subject.
- Standards are above the national average in GCSE.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good in all years.
- Leadership of the subject is good and the subject is well managed.

## Commentary

120. Standards were above average in the full course GCSE in 2004, with almost two-thirds of pupils entered for the examination achieving a grade C or above. The large majority of Year 10 and 11 pupils, however, did not receive their statutory entitlement to religious education and standards were adversely affected as a result. The new senior leadership team has already recognised this key issue and has developed an effective plan to rectify the matter for the next academic year. In the current Year 11, of those taking the full GCSE course, standards are at least average and good results seem likely again next summer. These pupils are achieving well, as are those in Year 10, who have recently started their GCSE course.
121. In Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils' achievement is satisfactory and the standard of their written work is average. Pupils generally work well together and cooperate during most lessons; they also share a mutual respect for their differing beliefs and views and work harmoniously together in the classroom setting. There is a positive and respectful working relationship between teachers and pupils in lessons, which aids progress significantly. Pupils are able to express thoughtful ideas of their own in lessons and are often able explain the position of their faith community. On rare occasions, a very small minority reduce the effectiveness of lessons by inattentiveness. In these rare instances, the pupil is ably tackled by the teacher and refocused on the task in hand.
122. Teaching and learning are of good quality in all year groups. The department is led by a highly knowledgeable specialist, who provides good curriculum leadership. Lessons are very well planned and resources are well used within the classroom, resulting in stimulating and valuable learning.
123. Currently, insufficient use is made of visits to places of local worship. This is a priority for future development. Pupils of different religions are actively used in a number of lessons as an invaluable learning resource for other pupils, and this positive approach helps the successful celebration of a range of beliefs.
124. In many of the written activities, pupils are encouraged to express their own viewpoint. Key learning tasks are often skilfully presented for the use of pupils of different abilities, and excellent classroom support is provided for those with special educational needs, ensuring they make good progress.
125. The head of department has a very clear vision for the further development of the subject and is keen to ensure its relevance to the lives of all pupils, irrespective of their particular faith background. There was a good contribution to pupils' spiritual and moral development in many lessons. Satisfactory progress has been made since the time of the previous inspection.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are excellent in food technology.
- There is inconsistency in the quality of teaching and learning between subjects.
- National Curriculum requirements are met.
- Study guides are used well.
- Assessment and tracking of pupils' progress are sound.



## Commentary

126. In GCSE examinations in 2003, the proportion of pupils achieving the grades A\*-C was well below the national average and the number of pupils achieving a pass grade was below the national average. Pupils studied one of resistant materials, graphic products, electronic products and food technology. Whilst the global standard was well below the national average, pupils studying food technology achieved a far higher standard. From the observation of lessons and the analysis of pupils' work, the global standard has significantly improved. It is now in line with nationally expected levels throughout the school. This is consistent with the rise in standards in their unverified exam results this year (2004). In teacher assessments at the end of Year 9, the standard was in line with the national average. This is confirmed by the inspection.
127. Many pupils start in Year 7 with below average skills, knowledge and understanding of DT. By the time they have reached the end of Year 9, the achievement of the majority of pupils is sound. At this stage, they have all studied resistant materials, graphics, electronics and food technology. Studies in food technology make a substantial, positive contribution to this overall sound achievement.
128. Pupils continue to make sound progress in Years 10 and 11 according to their individual abilities. This is because of the good help and attention they receive when they are working individually. At this stage they specialise in one of the four subjects for GCSE. However, gifted and talented pupils are not sufficiently encouraged to develop more complex designs and to explore wider issues. Except in food technology, they achieve less well. In two courses, pupils are slow to learn how to do isometric and orthographic drawings to a satisfactory standard. Pupils studying food technology achieve much better in all aspects of their course.
129. Younger pupils are less secure in developing their ability to explain their designs, research, modelling, choice of materials and construction sequence before manufacture. However, achievement in these elements is again inconsistent across the subjects. Achievement in computer control technology is weak. Pupils are not able to write a sequence of programmable commands to control mechanical events through a computer.
130. The quality of teaching is always sound. However it is very variable and ranges from sound to outstanding. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and teach with enthusiasm and good communication skills. They support and encourage the pupils, enabling them to experience success. Nearly all pupils tackle their work with enthusiasm and interest. Consequently, learning is always sound and for some subject groups it is outstanding. Though teaching of control technology is sound, greater clarity is needed to enable pupils to overcome their problems in this area. Learning for pupils with special needs and English as an additional language is good because they receive good support.
131. The department is managed to a sound standard. There are new and much improved systems for assessing pupils' work to National Curriculum levels of attainment. Leadership is sound and there are many examples of good teamwork. However, the most successful practice is not effectively shared or adopted. The part-time technicians and voluntary help provide very good support for the pupils during their practical work. However, this department is under-staffed for technicians and teaching and learning are still limited by this lack of full provision.
132. Since the last inspection there has been improvement in the schemes of work, so that staff and pupils are now better informed about what is to be learnt. Except for food technology, teaching and learning are still underdeveloped in the designing process before committing to production. Assessment has now improved but moderation across all contributory subjects is still not fully developed. All risk assessment has been completed.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Consistently improving GCSE examination results demonstrate very good achievement in Year 11.
- Very high standards are achieved in photography and painting as a result of good teaching and learning.
- Very good subject leadership is focused upon raising standards.
- Limited opportunities for pupils to work with three-dimensional media in Key Stage 3 restrict the development of high standards.

### **Commentary**

133. Standards in art and design are above average for boys at the end of Year 9. In 2003, examination results in GCSE at grades A\*-C are well above average. Since 2001 there has been a strong trend of improvement at GCSE and significantly higher results in art and design and photography were achieved in 2004.
134. Standards on entry in Year 7 are average overall. Over Years 7-9, all pupils achieve well and as a result standards are above average by the end of Year 9. Pupils show good improvement in observational drawing and become confident in using colour. The introduction of photography in Year 8 provides a good foundation for the high standards achieved in GCSE. Sketchbooks are used well and most pupils acquire a good knowledge of the work of other artists and cultures. They show competent skills in ceramics, but the limited opportunities offered in Years 7-9 prevents the development of high standards in three-dimensional media.
135. In Years 10-11, achievement is very good and the quality of work seen in lessons, portfolios and on display in the school indicate that standards are quickly improving over time, especially in drawing, painting and photography. Pupils are much better at carrying out visual research into the work of artists and photographers than in earlier years, and as a result their use of sketchbooks is very good. In photography, standards are very high; work is highly creative, helped by confident technique and increasingly by the effective use of ICT to explore imaginative imagery. In still life drawing from observation, standards are not as high and a greater variety of more challenging tasks are needed to help pupils improve.
136. Pupils have good attitudes, work hard and behave well. Relationships in lessons are positive and teachers manage behaviour well. Teaching is good and never less than satisfactory. In some lessons, teaching is very good and pupils' learning is very effective, particularly where they are able to work together and offer ideas and opinions about each other's work. Lessons are well planned and teachers' command of their subject is very high.
137. Subject leadership and management are very good and the department works well together to promote high standards. Displays in the art rooms are attractive. They show the standards which can be achieved and help the development of literacy by using key vocabulary. Assessment procedures are good and help pupils improve their work, but need to be more closely aligned to National Curriculum requirements in Years 7-9.
138. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. Standards have risen and the good quality of teaching and learning has been maintained.

## Music

Provision in Music is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment and achievement in Years 10 and 11 are good.
- Insufficient time and inappropriate timetable arrangements lead to unsatisfactory achievement by pupils in Years 8 and 9.
- Provision for IT is unsatisfactory.

### Commentary

139. Teachers' assessments that standards reached by pupils in Year 9 are close to the national average were confirmed by work seen during the inspection. GCSE results in music in 2004 matched the national average, and standards seen in Year 11 were well above this level in composing and performing, although numbers taking music are small. Achievement between Years 7 and 9 is unsatisfactory. Pupils enter the school with above average attainment and achieve well in Year 7. They enjoy music, and are eager to explore new ideas. Their rhythmic response and melodic memory are good, and they make good progress in developing listening and ensemble skills. However, because of the interruptions to learning caused by the rotation of music with religious education, pupils do not make systematic progress in Years 8 and 9, and struggle to maintain an average standard in Year 9. Pupils in Year 11 achieve well. Most are skilled performers, and because they are open-minded and interested in new ideas, their composing is inventive and relatively sophisticated. However, lack of music technology deprives them of opportunities to explore wider techniques. Although English is not the home language of several pupils, they cope well with the written requirements of the listening element of the course
140. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection, and is now satisfactory. Very good teaching was seen in Year 11, and in Year 7 teaching was good. There is a clear emphasis on practical activities, and pupils' responses have improved since the previous inspection. More consideration needs to be given to the development of pupils' sensitivity and discrimination by involving them in discussing and evaluating their work. Tasks are not always properly modified for less able pupils, or sufficiently challenging for those of higher ability.
141. The head of department, supported by the LEA and the school, has recently adopted a range of strategies to improve the achievement of younger pupils. A major revision of the scheme of work is under way, and the curriculum is now more appropriate than during the previous inspection. The assessment system is also more accurate, although pupils are not yet involved in self-assessment and target-setting. Leadership and management in music are unsatisfactory. The time allocated is too low to teach the subject in sufficient depth. The rotation of music with religious education in Years 8 and 9 and the current organisation of class groups is inappropriate. The single computer, recently acquired but not installed at the time of the inspection, is insufficient to allow staff to teach the National Curriculum in music in full, and the lack of music technology limits activities and achievement in Years 10 and 11. There is no adequate department development plan, and other department documents are incomplete. There is a great deal of obsolete equipment, and the accommodation is in need of adaptation and refurbishment to create greater flexibility for group and individual work at all stages.
142. Only a small percentage of pupils has instrumental lessons in school, and regular extra-curricular activities are limited. However, the department has recently re-established a programme of concerts and participation in other important school events in which significant numbers take part. There are regular visits by musicians from ethnic minority groups, but no visits to professional musical events take place.

143. Improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory, but recent changes are beginning to make an impact.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision in physical education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils in Years 7-9 achieve well in response to good teaching.
- By Year 9, pupils' standards are above average.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes, which contribute to good learning.
- Pupils enjoy a successful programme of extra-curricular sport.
- There is good leadership and management by the new head of department.
- Limited curriculum time for pupils in Years 10-11 restricts the quality and range of the curriculum.

### **Commentary**

144. During the inspection, lessons were focused on football. Standards in Year 9 are above average, in the key areas of skills, knowledge and understanding. Pupils show an above average standard of passing and tackling skills, and deploy them well in games. The percentage of pupils gaining an A\* - C grade at GCSE was close to the national average in 2003, and well above this figure in 2004. Current standards in Year 11 GCSE groups are average. Pupils in GCSE football often display a good level of practical skill, but their work in theory is more variable in quality. The most able pupils show good understanding and good communication skills in their coursework, for example when devising and evaluating fitness programmes. It was not possible during the inspection to observe sufficient core physical education for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to make a judgement on standards in the non-examined course, although in the one Year 10 lesson seen, pupils demonstrated a good standard and range of football skills.
145. Pupils join the school with average standards in physical education, and achieve well by Year 9. Pupils in Year 11 GCSE achieve satisfactorily overall; they achieve better in practical activities than in theoretical work. Pupils of all levels of ability, including the most able, those with special educational needs, and those with English as an additional language, achieve as well as other pupils.
146. Teaching is good, and combined with very positive attitudes of pupils, results in good learning. The qualities include teachers' very good subject knowledge and the high expectations teachers have of pupils. The teaching is particularly effective in promoting active learning and initiative, for example in getting pupils to devise warm-up routines, to act as coaches, and to reflect on how they can improve when translating specific football skills into a full game. Teachers give very good feedback to pupils, leading to rapid improvements in technique and tactical awareness, and questioning is used well to assess understanding and to consolidate knowledge.
147. Leadership and management are good. The new head of department has evaluated provision and initiated key improvements in areas such as assessment. Management is satisfactory; it is not yet good because the impact of developments such as monitoring has not had time to take effect. Extra-curricular sport is a strength: the school has a good record of success in inter-school sport, and an outstanding record in cricket nationally. However, curriculum time is limited for pupils doing core physical education in Years 10-11, and this limits the quality and range of their curriculum.
148. Improvement since the last report has been good. Overall standards and progress have improved, as has assessment. The strength in teaching has been maintained.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION (PSHE) AND CITIZENSHIP**

From an inspection of the curriculum for PSHE and by conversation with staff and pupils, it is clear that personal, social and health education is good, and covers the range of necessary information well. Careers provision is good also. The careers department is very well organised and makes a positive contribution to the personal development programme. PSHE lessons were not taught during the days of the inspection, so that no further judgment can be made of their quality.

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The subject knowledge and commitment of the new coordinator are good.
- Planning and schemes of work are very good.
- Pupils' involvement in various aspects of the running of the school is good.
- The pupil parliament promotes involvement in good citizenship and democracy.

### **Commentary**

149. Standards of work are average and in line with nationally expected levels. Planning and preparation for the newly emerging citizenship curriculum at the school are of good quality and are likely to be instrumental in raising standards further, during the current academic year.
150. During the inspection, evidence of pupils' knowledge and understanding, skills of enquiry, communication and participation, as well as responsible action, was all available, in different forms. Pupils make satisfactory progress in this subject throughout the school and assessments are efficiently arranged for each half-term unit of work.
151. Citizenship is delivered through a dedicated, weekly lesson for all pupils in Years 7-9 and through a weekly, rotated system in Years 10-11, where it is merged with personal and social education and a structured careers programme. Under the leadership of the new headteacher, pupils are strongly encouraged to show a greater interest in the decision making process governing school life and to take a proactive part in the running of the school. There is a very active and vibrant school parliament, fully supported by the headteacher, who personally attaches a high priority to the further development of this key aspect of school life.
152. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, both in lessons seen which contain elements of citizenship and in specialist lessons dedicated to the subject. Clear objectives are given at the start of lessons and the three key strands of the national programmes of study are linked together carefully by teachers, in order to clarify pupils' learning.
153. Leadership and management are good. The recently appointed teacher in charge provides strong commitment, extensive subject knowledge and good curriculum leadership. These have already ensured that the citizenship programme makes an important contribution to pupils' personal development across the school. The programme works well in tandem with the closely related, and fully established, personal and social education programme.
154. The newly launched citizenship programme is well led and lesson planning is systematically documented in Years 7-9, with evidence of good planning also in Years 10-11.
155. Citizenship is a relatively new National Curriculum subject and was not reported at the time of the previous inspection.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2003. For some subjects, national comparative data are not available, and this is indicated by 'n/a'.

### GCE ADVANCED SUBSIDIARY LEVEL "AS"

#### 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	14	93	80	43	24	41	30
Biology	34	65	65	12	11	22	21
Chemistry	33	58	73	9	14	22	24
Design Technology	5	100	75	40	15	38	25
Economics	24	54	74	4	20	17	26
Electronics	7	86	n/a	14	n/a	30	n/a
English Literature	5	80	86	0	19	24	30
English Language and Literature	12	92	86	33	18	35	29
French	9	44	78	0	19	13	28
Geography	7	86	74	14	20	30	27
German	1	100	82	0	19	40	29
Government and Politics	9	78	n/a	33	n/a	31	n/a
History	27	96	81	26	20	39	29
Information Technology	30	70	67	3	11	20	21
Mathematics	13	100	62	31	17	39	22
PE	5	20	73	0	11	4	23
Psychology	27	63	n/a	19	n/a	26	n/a
Physics	21	76	69	10	14	25	23
Community languages	2	100	n/a	100	n/a	55	n/a

#### 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	7	100	99	29	50	83	86
Biology	15	93	96	20	39	63	79
Business Studies AVCE	17	88	99	41	37	88	80
Chemistry	14	50	98	29	49	40	85

Design Technology	6	83	98	17	35	50	78
Economics	16	88	99	13	52	56	88
English Literature	11	91	99	27	47	64	87
English Language and Literature	8	88	99	0	36	60	81
Further Mathematics	3	67	n/a	33	n/a	67	n/a
French	2	100	99	50	52	90	88
Geography	2	100	99	0	45	60	84
German	1	100	98	100	48	100	85
Government and Politics	17	88	n/a	12	n/a	59	n/a
History	20	100	99	70	45	97	85
Information Technology	23	100	96	17	25	69	70
Mathematics	22	100	97	73	56	95	89
Music	2	100	99	50	39	90	81
Physics	14	100	97	29	45	73	82
Psychology	6	100	n/a	33	n/a	77	n/a

## ENGLISH, LANGUAGES and COMMUNICATION

AS and A2 level courses were inspected in English language and English literature, and French. These subjects are reported on below.

### English

Provision in English is **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Exam results at A2 level are improving.
- Teachers inspire students with a love of literature.
- Teachers do not give sufficient guidance on how to compose essays or prepare for examinations.

### Commentary

156. Results in the language and literature AS examinations in 2003 were close to nationally expected levels, but in literature a small entry failed to attain as expected. Results in A2 were below the national average in language, but were average for literature. In both courses, outcomes were very much better in 2004.

157. Standards seen in lessons and written work are in line with these results. In Year 12, students still make many simple mistakes, writing sentences whose meaning is often unclear. They can use the technical terms of literary criticism or linguistics, but lack the confidence to use them coherently. In both years, they have little opportunity to think for themselves and do not contribute frequently to discussion. Their best work was seen in their own short stories, which are often written in the style of established authors, accompanied by perceptive commentaries.

158. Though attainment is below nationally expected levels in Year 12, achievement is satisfactory because those embarking on courses have GCSE results mostly below those expected for A-Level. They make slow progress to begin with, but improve rapidly in Year 13, when many

students perform better than expected. Overall, students' achievement and progress are good.

159. Teaching is satisfactory in Year 12, and good in Year 13. All teachers expound with good knowledge and infectious enthusiasm. They relate well to their students and mark their work thoroughly and helpfully. Students say they enjoy their lessons. They speak warmly of how much they love literature and the exploration of language, its origins and complexities. At its best, therefore, learning is good, particularly in Year 13. However, teachers do not sufficiently allow students to discuss and learn from each other. Teachers need to spend more time helping students individually with the construction and accuracy of their essays.
160. The head of department is aware of this weakness, arguing that as the course develops students will have more opportunities to become independent learners. It will help if teachers share the good practice of the best in the department, and use a greater variety of approach. More precise tracking procedures should also ensure that those who embark on courses have the ability to fulfil the requirements, and consequently achieve well.
161. Very few students fail to finish the course. Girls now make a significant contribution. Exam results had shown little improvement until 2004 when, in language, nearly half the candidates achieved grades A and B, and in literature two out of three did so.

### **Language across the curriculum**

162. Across the curriculum, skills in literacy are well developed, particularly in history, where students receive good training in the writing of well structured prose. Students are articulate, but more opportunities are needed for speaking in English. The library is well used by sixth formers.

### **French**

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

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

- The quality of teaching and learning is mostly good.
- A2 students make good progress in speaking and listening in lessons.
- Numbers taking French at A2 have been low over the last three years.
- Half the students taking AS level over the last three years have underachieved in relation to their GCSE grades.
- Revision of the AS course is required to meet the needs of the less talented students.
- Students are not required to redraft their corrected work or keep logs of their independent work.

#### **Commentary**

163. In 2003 the two A2 students gained an A and a D grade. This represented satisfactory achievement in relation to their previous levels of attainment. Out of the nine AS students, three gained their expected grade, but six underachieved, with five gaining no grade. Results over the last three years show a similar picture of low numbers at A2 and underachievement at AS.
164. In the current Year 13, standards for three students are above average and students achieve well in class. Their understanding of the teachers' rapid French is good. Students express their ideas and opinions well, because of their mostly wide vocabulary and real interest in the subject materials. Their written work is, however, sometimes inaccurate in spelling and



structure. They are not required to learn by redrafting their work, after the teachers have carefully marked it.

165. Standards in the current Year 12 are below average. Student numbers were low at the start of the course and have reduced since. Students have found it difficult to make the transition from their GCSE course to the more demanding AS course. Their knowledge of grammar and structure is weak and despite study at home they struggle to recall their learning in class. Students have made slow progress at this very early stage of the AS course in both speaking and listening skills. With the teachers' careful and continuous support and guidance in making sentences and forming opinions, they achieve satisfactorily.
166. Teaching and learning are good overall for the relatively small numbers who complete the course in Year 12. Teaching and learning are very good in Year 13. The main strength is the bilingual teachers' rapid and demanding delivery of French so that students can listen and develop their listening and speaking skills very effectively. Teachers provide their own interesting course materials and have a clear understanding of how students build up their skills and knowledge of grammar and structure. In the lessons seen, teachers gave continuous encouragement as well as challenge, so that students felt well supported. Students, however, do not keep folders of lesson materials, nor logs of their independent listening and reading work for teachers to guide and assess their progress in these areas.
167. Leadership and management are good under new management. The course is well planned and up-to-date. The team has a real sense of purpose and high aspirations for their students. Teachers are imaginative in their approach to providing materials. However, much further discussion and development work on bridging the gap between GCSE and AS are essential if students are to survive the AS course. There is no foreign language assistant to provide extra time and support for AS and A2 students' listening and speaking skills. Finance for this purpose has not been provided through the school's programme for gifted and talented students. There are no study trips. Very few students take up opportunities organised by the school for work experience in various European countries.
168. There has been no improvement since the last inspection. A-Level results and student numbers have dipped.

## **MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCES**

AS and A2 courses were inspected in mathematics, physics and chemistry. These are reported on fully below. Biology was sampled by visiting lessons, one each for Years 12 and 13. The qualities of teaching and learning varied, one lesson being unsatisfactory and the other good. Standards in biology in recent years are less successful than standards in chemistry and physics.

### **Mathematics**

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

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

- A-Level results in the last two years have been above national average.
- The number of students successfully following further mathematics is increasing.
- The department is excellently led and managed and there is flexibility in the speed at which students are able to proceed through their courses of study.
- Teaching is good overall and consequently students are well motivated and work hard.
- There is scope for greater use of group discussion and presentations to enable more able students to explore ideas and to expose other students to their thinking.

## Commentary

169. A-Level mathematics students do very well at the school. Over the last few years, the proportion of students gaining the highest grades at A2 has been above the national average with a further increase in the current year. In the last three years, no students who studied A2-Level mathematics failed to achieve a grade. Each year around fifteen to twenty students, many from other schools, re-take GCSE mathematics in Year 12. Their rate of success is unusually high with approximately seventy per cent of students obtaining grades A\*-C.
170. Mathematics is a popular choice in the sixth form, with a significant number of students entering the course from other schools, and consistently good numbers of students completing the two-year course. Achievement of higher grades by students who take AS in Year 12 is in line with the national average. Those who only study for one year achieve a high pass rate at AS-Level. The highest attaining mathematicians take their AS examination early.
171. The standards of work seen in lessons reflect the attainment in examinations. Students enjoy their mathematics, concentrate hard and support each other well in their studies. The written work in lessons of some students falls below the normal quality as they rush to get their ideas on paper and consequently avoidable errors appear which slow their progress. This is particularly true in algebraic notation as they lose track of powers and sub-scripts. All students show a good instant knowledge of essential formulae and theory. All achieve well or very well.
172. Teaching is very good overall. Teachers work very effectively as a team to ensure that they know the work of their students well and consequently they help them to make good progress. They probe students' thinking with good questioning, but more could be done, particularly with the more able students, to get them to explore and explain the most elegant solutions to problems. A very good feature of mathematics in the sixth form is the personalised programmes which enable students to progress as fast as they can through the units of study to maximise their achievement.
173. Leadership is excellent. The head of department sets very high expectations for his team. Management is excellent. Students can work at their own pace and decide when they are ready to take assessments. This is very motivating for them, and contributes significantly to their high achievement.
174. Improvement since the last inspection has been good, particularly in the achievement of higher standards.

## Numeracy across the curriculum

175. Most students in the sixth form enter with at least a good grade in GCSE mathematics and have already experienced a rigorous approach to the subject in Years 7-11. Consequently, these students have good numerical skills and are competent in the necessary data handling in subjects such as geography and science, including rank correlations, standard distribution and variance. Their algebra is also good enough to handle the formula work required of them. The small proportion who enter with a lower level of mathematical attainment have usually entered the sixth form from another school and are sitting their GCSE mathematics examination. They are well motivated to acquire mathematical skills and as a result they too, after a few months, acquire the necessary mathematical skills for their courses.

## Physics

Provision in physics is **satisfactory**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attainment is in line with national averages.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Not enough is done to coordinate how managers monitor and then seek to improve students' progress.

### Commentary

176. Standards of attainment are broadly in line with national averages. In 2003 the standards attained in A2 were at the national average. This standard was better than the standard attained in 2002. Standards in AS in 2003 were close to national averages, though the proportion attaining ungraded outcomes was high. Results in 2004 for both A2 and AS examinations maintained the levels attained in 2003. Attainment during the inspection was broadly in line with nationally expected levels.
177. Achievement is satisfactory overall at both AS and A2 levels. In recent years, the extent of progress from the grades attained in GCSE has been satisfactory. Even so, a quarter of the cohort each year completed their study without having achieved a grade. The school last year wisely raised the intake level to its AS course. Current achievement in Year 12 on the AS course is better. For example, students understand some new ideas with ease.
178. Teaching and learning are both good. Teachers are expert in physics and they set suitably challenging work. Teachers' planning varies from good to satisfactory. They assess effectively whether students understand the new ideas and adapt the lessons well so that students grasp what is taught. Learners work independently enough, and their overall productivity is good.
179. Other factors influence standards and achievement. The key issue is management of subject areas in advanced science. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory. However, there is insufficient coordination of how to improve students' progress. For example, progress checks are under-used as a tool for managing the work of the staff. The situation now in physics is broadly in line with the overall comments about all post-16 science reported in the previous inspection.

## Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **satisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Too many students have attained ungraded results.
- Current attainments and achievements are satisfactory.
- As in physics, the monitoring of students' work needs improvement.

### Commentary

180. Standards attained in 2003 were below average. In that year there were no A grades in A2 examinations and results of seven students were ungraded. Results in A2 in 2004 are significantly better, and almost all students attained grades. In 2003, results from the AS course were below average. Results in 2004 in AS are much the same as those for 2003. The key weakness is that too many students at AS do not achieve grades. Over several years, results at A2 Level for chemistry have improved slowly. Current attainment, as observed during the inspection, is close to nationally expected levels.

181. Overall achievement in Advanced Level chemistry is satisfactory, with some good features. Students at the start of their AS course gain a sound understanding of key concepts about atoms. Year 13 students at the start of their A2 course rapidly consolidate previous knowledge and cope well with new ideas about molecular structure.
182. Teaching and learning are both satisfactory. Teachers are expert, explain matters clearly and organise progress through each unit of work well. Students make sufficient progress in skills, knowledge and understanding. They work effectively and have the capacity for independent study. Year 13 students report that facilities are of good quality, and accessible. They feel their teachers support them and broaden their study of chemistry.
183. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory. A key factor affecting standards in recent years has been the lack of coordination in the management of the overall department. Assessment data are under-used to direct improvements. It has taken too long to begin to resolve the issue of ungraded results. Current provision is now more secure, though broadly in line with the situation reported in the previous inspection.

### **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

The focus of the inspection was ICT. This is reported on below.

Provision in ICT is **very good**.

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

- Examination results have improved significantly at AS-Level and improvement was good at A-Level this year.
- The provision for ICT in the sixth form has improved significantly.
- Sixth form ICT rooms and resources are well managed.
- Teaching is very good and staff work effectively as a team.
- Students display a positive attitude to their work in ICT and are keen to do well.
- Resources and accommodation for sixth form ICT courses are now very good; teachers and students use them very effectively.

#### **Commentary**

184. There has been some fluctuation in A-Level results in the last three years as the number of candidates has increased significantly. In 2003 they were close to the average for the higher AB grades and all candidates passed the examination. There has been a good increase in the higher grades this year and all candidates passed the examination. This represents very good achievement for A-Level students over the past three years.
185. The standards attained at AS-Level in ICT have been some way below average in recent years. However, in 2004 there was a very significant improvement in A-B and A-E grades, making results much higher than the national average of recent years.
186. Work seen in lessons and in students' computer files shows that standards are good overall and often very good. As a result of very good teaching, with greatly improved resources and accommodation, students' achievement is very good. Well planned and executed lessons move at a good pace and cater for the whole range of abilities. Students respond very well to the challenging work and interesting activities, which are features of all lessons. Theory lessons are often conducted away from computer rooms. A particularly good planning session was seen with groups completing flipcharts and making lively presentations. Work is assessed thoroughly and feedback to students is good, setting challenging goals and enabling them to develop their learning skills, as well as ICT skills and knowledge.

187. Leadership and management are very good. The growing ICT teaching team works very effectively, sharing tasks and providing mutual support. Relationships with students are very good. Students find staff approachable and helpful. There has been a good improvement in sixth form ICT provision since the last inspection and the department has the capacity to improve further.

### **ICT across the curriculum**

188. The use of ICT in the sixth form is improving as resources improve. Most subjects are using ICT in at least some aspects of their work. A minority of departments is not using ICT resources adequately to enhance teaching and learning. Increasing and effective use is being made by teachers of interactive whiteboards. There is scope for more direct student use of boards, to make classwork more interactive. Autonomous use of ICT by students is good. They have access to portable computers, with Internet access, which are based in the library. They can usually use machines in ICT rooms. Most students have at least adequate skills for their courses and increasing numbers have good skills. Students can improve their competence in ICT further through ICT key skills lessons, which are available to all sixth form students.

### **HUMANITIES**

AS and A2 courses were inspected in history, geography, and government and politics. These subjects were the focus of inspection.

One lesson was sampled in psychology, where the teaching was found to be very good, and the achievement of students likewise very good.

#### **History**

Provision in history is **very good**.

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

- Standards on the A2 course are well above average and achievement is very good.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Leadership and management are very good.
- Students have very good attitudes towards the study of history and the numbers who wish to study the subject at AS-Level are growing.
- Students do not read widely enough.

#### **Commentary**

189. A-Level results have been well above national averages for the last three years and achievement has been very good. A-Level entries have remained consistently high, and history has one of the largest A-Level cohorts in the school, recruiting from a range of ability. Interest in the subject continues to grow. This summer, 38 students entered at AS-Level, and over a third of these achieved A-C grades. Attainment was above average, and achievement good.

190. Standards seen during the inspection are above nationally expected levels. Year 12 students have had a successful induction to the start of their AS course. Year 13 students have acquired a detailed body of historical knowledge. One group of Year 13 students demonstrated a good knowledge and understanding of the problems facing Alexander II. Another group showed their understanding of Marxist philosophy. Essay writing is of a very good standard. It is well structured, with evidence to support individual judgements. Higher attaining students have developed the ability to write sustained and well-supported arguments to justify their conclusions. All have honed their study skills. They can analyse historical sources critically and evaluate a wide range of evidence effectively. However, students do not

do enough independent reading around the subject, though they do use the Internet to research topics. Some are content to rely upon the very good texts with which they are provided.

191. Teaching is very good and leads to very good learning. Very good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for history are used to motivate and inform students. Lessons are planned to provide good opportunities for students to think critically for themselves and they are encouraged to develop debating skills. They are provided with a wide range of support materials. Assessment is regular and teachers' marking is thorough with detailed comments designed to improve attainment and maximise potential. Students feel that they are well supported.
192. Leadership and management are very good. Very good assessment procedures, clearly presented schemes of work and detailed monitoring of the performance of staff and students have led to the achievements reported above. The team of hard working sixth form teachers has high expectations of their students and is always available to support them when needed.
193. Improvement since the last inspection has been excellent.

## **Geography**

Provision in geography is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good teaching engages students' interest and promotes their thinking skills.
- Teachers give very good support to students.
- Small numbers study geography in the sixth form.

### **Commentary**

194. The small number of students who take geography in the sixth form and their wide range of prior attainment in the subject make comparison with national averages difficult. In all recent years the results of students who have taken the A2 examination has on the whole been at least in line with what could be expected of them. No student has gained an A grade at A2 in the past three years, but in the lessons seen during the inspection, students with the highest grades at GCSE were being extended by rigorous and challenging teaching and were achieving well.
195. The results of AS papers taken in 2004 were lower than in previous years, reflecting the underachievement of a number of students. However, the work of these students in Year 13 is more in line with expectations than their disappointing results in the AS examinations would suggest. In analysing their Dorset fieldwork data, higher attaining students applied statistical tests accurately and made very good use of ICT to present their reports for the AS examination. Overall, achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory.
196. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers use starter activities very effectively, plan lessons to use a range of well-chosen resources, and often set short tasks which lead to a brisk pace. In skilfully led whole-class discussions, teachers are careful to involve all students and extend the depth and range of their thinking. Teaching is lively and so encourages naturally reserved groups to join in oral work. Students work well together on enquiry tasks. Appropriate homework, with a short but realistic timescale, was set at the end of each lesson observed. Students speak of the very good support given by their teachers.
197. Leadership and management are good. The sixth form teachers have shared in developing a wider variety of learning styles. Monitoring students' performance and arrangements for field study are good. A priority for the subject is to increase the number of students choosing to

study geography. Retention rates in each year group are high and so is the number of students going on from the AS to the A2 course.

198. The shortage of specialist accommodation means that sixth form lessons take place in a large number of rooms and that the students have no access to a sixth form resource or study base in the subject area.

199. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection.

## **Government and politics**

Provision in government and politics is **good**.

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

- Teaching is good, by a specialist in the subject.
- Students from a wide range of ability take the subject at AS-Level, with many continuing to A2 and beyond.
- Line management for this subject is unclear.
- There is too little use of ICT.

#### **Commentary**

200. Standards at A-Level vary from just below to above the national average. Numbers taking the subject are small, but these few students make good progress over the two-year course. Few achieve the very highest grades, but in two of the last four years there has been a 100 per cent pass rate. AS results are again variable, but have declined slightly in recent years, reflecting the broad spectrum of ability among the students.

201. The quality of teaching is good, and some aspects of teaching are excellent. Students are enthusiastic about the subject because they are motivated to take responsibility for their learning. Considering that this is the first time they will have studied government and politics, they make good progress.

202. It is left to one teacher to manage the subject, and he does this satisfactorily. He has responsibility for the budget, but does not have the status of a head of department, despite having a virtually autonomous role in the leadership of his subject area.

203. There was no use of ICT in either of the lessons observed during the inspection. However, the subject teacher is currently committing one module of the AS specification to CD-ROM. It is intended that the Internet will be used for research and for individual learning, enabling an already effective area to improve still further. This subject was not inspected in the last inspection.

## **ART and DESIGN**

AS and A2 courses in Art and Design were inspected. These subjects are reported on below.

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good teaching and learning have resulted in improved examination results.
- Very high standards are attained in photography and painting.
- Subject leadership is very good.

- The weekly life drawing class is an excellent provision that is promoting high standards in observational drawing.

### **Commentary**

204. In 2003, examination results at ALevel were above the national average for boys. In AS, results were in line with the average, but were an improvement on the previous year. In 2004, results rose significantly.
205. The achievement of students in art and design is very good and standards in photography and painting are very high. Current A2 photography students demonstrate high levels of technical skill together with creative flair and imagination. Many students acquire good skills in manipulating images, using computers to create highly expressive artwork. In AS, students quickly extend their capability in visual research and knowledge of the work of notable photographers and artists using sketchbooks and work journals. The standard of these is high. Standards of work in A2 fine art are high, especially in respect of painting, where many students produce large, lively oil paintings inspired by research into art history and the life drawing class. The standard of observational drawing is good as a result of the life drawing provision, but there is scope for improvement here, particularly at AS-Level.



206. Teaching and learning are consistently good and as a result, students make very good progress over the course. Teachers have good expertise and teaching methods are well matched to the students' needs. Activities are challenging and lead to positive attitudes. Assessment processes are well matched to examination requirements and student progress is carefully supervised.
207. The department is very well led and managed. All staff contribute to sixth form teaching, using common themes so that there is good continuity of learning. Subject documentation and curriculum planning are good and the students have regular opportunities for study visits to national galleries and museums. However, staffing issues are preventing the annual international visit from taking place. Art and design is rapidly gaining in popularity in the sixth form and student numbers are rapidly increasing. The course completion rate is very high.
208. Improvement since the last inspection is good. Examination results have been improved and the good quality of teaching and learning has been maintained.

## **BUSINESS**

The focus was on Business Studies and Economics, which are reported below.

### **Business Studies**

Provision in Business Studies is **very good**.

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

- Results in the AVCE examination are well above national averages and students achieve very well.
- Leadership and management of the subject are excellent.
- Teaching and learning are very good.
- GNVQ results are above national averages and students achieve well.
- Both courses are taught without a base room and students and teachers are disadvantaged by this.

#### **Commentary**

209. In Years 12 and 13, the school offers the Advanced Certificate of Vocational Education (AVCE) and the GNVQ in Business in Year 12. Attainment at AVCE was well above average for the past two years and students did much better than was suggested by their GCSE results so that their achievement was very good. At AS in 2004, half of those entered obtained the highest AB grades and all passed. Attainment in GNVQ has steadily improved since the course was introduced three years ago. It is now above national averages and students achieve well.
210. Year 12 students on the GNVQ course have made a good beginning and at this early stage are progressing well. Standards in the current Year 13 AVCE class are very good. Most students are articulate and clear thinking and work well together as a team. They have a lively and enquiring approach to the subject and are self-confident learners. This was clearly demonstrated in the lesson where they gave a presentation on training and recruitment using PowerPoint. These students' portfolios showed knowledge and understanding of the business environment in which competitive business operates. They can apply knowledge and critical understanding to problems and issues, for example marketing tools of analysis to evaluate the likely success of a marketing strategy. All are competent users of ICT. Achievement overall is very good.

211. Teaching is very good, well planned and very well organised. Students learn very well as a result. Subject expertise is used to motivate and to ensure that students complete their tasks with the right level of analysis. Students are given excellent support. They have clear information about course objectives, they are given checklists to use and marking and assessment is very detailed with helpful comments designed to help them improve their learning. The department has good links with outside businesses.
212. The very good provision for business education in the sixth form results from the excellent leadership and management of the subject. These have been responsible for the very good teaching, growing curriculum and good results described above. However, neither of these courses in business education has a base room from which to operate. This means that computer hardware has to be moved across the school to classrooms located away from the business studies area. This is not only inconvenient for teachers and students, but it wastes time and denies students the opportunity to work in a dedicated base room outside lesson times. This subject was not inspected in the last inspection.

## **Economics**

One lesson was seen in each of Years 12 and 13. Students' work from both years was scrutinised and economics work was discussed with students.

Provision in economics is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is good.
- Management is effective.
- Many students achieve well in relation to their potential.
- Assessment is thorough and helps students to improve.
- Opportunities for active group work and student presentations are limited.
- There are no ICT resources in the economics department to enhance teaching and learning or provide access to current economics data.

### **Commentary**

213. Examination results at AB grades in Advanced Level in 2003 declined from the previous year and were well below the national average. The percentage achieving at least a pass grade was close to the average. At AS-Level, there were no higher grades and A to E grades were well below average. In 2004 there was a good improvement in the higher grades at A2, with one quarter of candidates attaining AB grades. At AS-Level the overall pass rate increased significantly. There was a number of AB grades and the overall percentage of students attaining a pass grade is likely to be close to the national average when comparative figures become available. These results represent good achievement for students on both courses.
214. Current standards seen in lessons and in students' portfolios indicate that overall attainment in Year 13 at A2 level is satisfactory. About a quarter of students demonstrate good attainment overall although there is a wide range of both ability and attainment in evidence. In Year 12 at AS-Level standards are satisfactory although the range of ability and attainment is very wide. Students in both years are generally very willing to respond to questions, although in Year 12 they do not demonstrate a good knowledge of current UK or world economics in the early stages of the course. The situation is much better in Year 13, where students are up-to-date and able to use pertinent examples during class discussions. Achievement in lessons is good.
215. Teaching in both years is good. The teacher has very good subject knowledge and students have a comprehensive set of notes. Work is marked regularly with detailed diagnostic comments. However, evidence from students' portfolios indicates a limited range of student-

centred work, including problem-solving, group work and presentations. Although ICT is used for the presentation of work and there is some evidence of computer-based research, there is little evidence of ICT being used for data analysis or for modelling events to encourage students to put theory into practice.

216. Leadership and management are good. Students have current textbooks and other relevant resources. However, there are no computer-based resources available for use in the economics department. Access to spreadsheets and up-to-date economics resources via the Internet would increase the range of teaching strategies available to the department. There was no reference to economics in the last inspection report.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

The leadership of the headteacher		2
The leadership of other key staff	3	3
The effectiveness of management	3	4

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