

INSPECTION REPORT

Harrogate Grammar School

Harrogate, North Yorkshire

LEA area: North Yorkshire

Unique reference number: 121685

Headteacher: Dr Philip Limbert

Lead inspector: Elizabeth Charlesworth

Dates of inspection: 8th - 12th November 2004

Inspection number: 268816

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:	Mixed
Number on roll;	1644
School address:	Arthurs Avenue Harrogate North Yorkshire
Postcode:	HG2 0DZ
Telephone number:	01423 531127
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Dr G Megson
Date of previous inspection:	April 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Harrogate Grammar School is a very large comprehensive school and specialist language college with a very large sixth form. The building is currently undergoing a refurbishment programme which will be completed with a new library and arts centre. The school occupies a large site close to the centre of the town. The vast majority of pupils and students are of white UK origin. There are two pupils and students who are at an early stage of learning English. There is one Traveller pupil and no refugees or asylum seekers. The proportion of pupils and students claiming free school meals is well below the national average and most pupils and students are from advantaged homes close to the school and the villages of North Yorkshire close to Harrogate. The attainment on entry of pupils to the school is well above average. The percentage of pupils and students with special educational needs and with Statements of Special Educational Needs is well below the national average, their needs being specific learning (dyslexia), moderate learning, social, emotional and behavioural, physical and autistic. Very few pupils leave or join the school other than at the normal times. The school takes part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award and Young Enterprise, and has awards for Investor in People, School Achievement, Sportsmark and Special Educational Needs Quality Mark.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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4720	Graham Carter	Team inspector	Biology Chemistry
33518	Terry Freedman	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Post-16 business education
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3755	Trevor Hulbert	Team inspector	History Work-related learning
11838	Derek Cronin	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages English as an additional language
8360	Frederick Peacock	Team inspector	Music Special educational needs
3225	Christine Hough	Team inspector	Business education Post-16 physical education
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3266	Peter Baker	Team inspector	Drama Media studies
33437	Peter Sanderson	Team inspector	Science
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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	10
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	15
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	20
OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES – Work-related learning	22
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES	23
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4	
SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORMS	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	53

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **very effective** school providing a very good standard of education for its pupils and students. Commitment to high standards by all staff and pupils results in very good achievement. Leadership and management are very good. The school gives **very good** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils and students both in the main school **and** in the sixth form gain well above average results in public examinations.
- Pupils and students have very good attitudes and develop very good working relationships with each other and their teachers.
- Teachers are experts in their subjects and their hard-working, cheerful manner has a positive impact on pupils' and students' achievement.
- Pupils and students eagerly take part in the very good range of extra-curricular activities.
- The lack of pace and challenge in science teaching is holding back achievement in science.
- The very thorough analysis of assessment information gives teachers and pupils a firm foundation on which to build for success.
- Students in the sixth form set themselves high goals which point the way for younger pupils in their own personal development.

The school has made **very good** progress since the previous inspection in that standards have risen and teaching and learning are now very good. Most of the key issues have been dealt with. The accommodation has been vastly improved through a recent refurbishment of most of the school, leaving only the library and performing arts accommodation to be completed in the final phase. There has been a change of headteacher and deputy headteacher and most of the governing body, including the chair, has been in post for only a short time. The school still does not provide a daily act of collective worship.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Year 11 and 13 results

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2004	2003	2002	2004
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	A	A	A	A*
Year 13	A/AS level and VCE examinations	A	A	A	

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

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

By the end of Year 9 pupils reach standards which are well above average in the national tests for 14 year olds in 2004. A much greater proportion of pupils than is found nationally reached the highest levels. Compared with schools that had similar prior attainment results were very high and in the top five per cent of similar schools nationally. Assessments carried out by teachers were also well above average and results are rising faster than they are nationally. Work seen during the inspection is **above average**, and **very good** achievement in Years 7 to 9 indicates that pupils are building on their well-above average level of attainment on entry and will maintain the upward pattern of results. These well-above average results were also found in GCSE and in the sixth form examinations in 2004. Results are rising at a faster rate than nationally and 87 per cent of pupils

gained five A* to C grades. However, in science results rose only slightly and pupils did not perform as well as they did in their other subjects. The school had identified the science department as an area for development and the results of its efforts here are beginning to pay off. In work seen during the inspection standards are also **well above average** and achievement is **very good** in Years 10 and 11. In the sixth form most students passed all the subjects they took at AS and A level, with many more A and B grades than nationally. Attendance is **good** and has remained consistent in the last two years. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **very good** in the main school and **excellent** in the sixth form, and relationships within the school are very positive. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good** overall. Pupils' and students' spiritual, moral and social awareness is particularly strong.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is very good. Teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9 are **good** and in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form are **very good**. Pupils and students make great strides in the acquisition of knowledge and deepening of understanding because teachers are experts in their field and share their passion for their subject. Pupils and students are inspired to learn and this commitment to study is at the heart of their achievement. Curriculum provision is **very good**. An extended range of subjects and innovative use of alternative pathways allows pupils to make course choices appropriate to their needs and interests. Committed staff provide a **very good**, wide range of high quality additional activities that further enrich learning and which are enjoyed by many pupils and students. Highly qualified staff use their specialist subject knowledge to provide advice and support that is very good and often excellent, especially in the sixth form. Accommodation and resources are **good** overall, though some areas of art and design and technology are unsuitable.

The care, welfare, health and safety of pupils are **very good**, as are the support, advice and guidance. The involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is **good** and of students in the sixth form is **very good**. The links with parents are **good**. Links with the community are **good** and **very good** in the sixth form. Links with other schools and colleges are **good**, and **very good** in the sixth form, especially the links with primary schools and with institutions of higher education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The leadership of the headteacher is **very good**. Other key staff are **very good** leaders. The management of the school is **very good** and ensures that the school improves and runs very smoothly. The governance of the school is **good** and improving as committee structures and roles are becoming more firmly established and more effective.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The school is very popular and is oversubscribed. The parents' questionnaire analysis indicated an overwhelmingly positive picture of parental satisfaction. They feel strongly that their children enjoy school, are making good progress, they behave well and the teaching is good. Pupils are expected to work hard and are encouraged to become mature. Parents raised the issue of feeling that the school does not sufficiently seek their views and act on them as part of school improvement and would like more involvement. Verbally at the parents' meeting and in writing during the inspection, a small number of parents expressed concerns about specific school - wide leadership and managerial issues. The inspection evidence does not support the concerns.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Further develop the use of self-evaluation in order to procure greater consistency of teaching and learning.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Provide a daily act of collective worship.

SIXTH FORM SECTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **very good** sixth form, led with vision and commitment to the highest achievement. The sixth form is **very cost effective**.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- All students achieve very high results in public examinations.
- All students mature into responsible young adults.
- Students play a significant role in leading and managing the extensive range of inter-house competitions.
- There are very good partnerships between students and teachers in their pursuit of knowledge.

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 French	The provision for English is very good . Expectations of students are very high and students express themselves very clearly in speech and written work. Provision is good . Results at A level in 2003 were above average. Standards in lessons are above average in response to good teaching.
Mathematics	Provision is good and the results at A level are very good. Teachers have an excellent command of their subject.
Science: Chemistry Biology	Provision is good . Standards are above average and students achieve well because of good teaching and learning. Provision is good . Students achieve well and have very good attitudes to learning.
Humanities: History	Provision is excellent . This is supported by a true partnership between teachers and students which enables the highest quality of learning.
Geography	Provision is very good . Excellent leadership of the subject and very good teaching enable students to achieve very well. Standards are well above the national average.
Engineering, technology and manufacturing: Design and technology Visual and performing arts and media: Art and design	Provision is very good . Students' independent learning skills are developed to a high level and results are very good.
Theatre studies	The provision for art and design is very good . Students' independent learning skills are developed to a high level and results are very good. Provision in theatre studies is very good . Teaching, learning and achievement are very good and students reach high standards in examinations.
Media studies	Provision for media studies is very good . Achievement is very good because of very good teaching and learning and standards are high.

Hospitality, sports,
leisure and travel:
Physical education

The provision for physical education is **good**. Opportunities for pupils' personal development are excellent and teaching and learning are good.

Business

Provision for business education is **very good**. The range of courses caters for students' differing abilities and resources are used very effectively.

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

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Students are given **very good** advice, support and guidance about academic and personal development. The close working relationships with specialist sixth form pastoral staff were strongly commended by students.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Leadership and management are **excellent**. The underlying principle for introducing the International Baccalaureate shows a commitment to maximising achievement for the most able students. Sixth form tutors are carefully matched to their tutor groups and as a consequence, the quality of student mentoring is very high. This, combined with the resource of a very good assessment system ensures that all aspects of students' progress are closely monitored. Self evaluation is well informed and reflects a clear understanding of strengths and areas for further development.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students enjoy the friendly environment, very positive ethos, good student facilities and the freedom and privileges that students have. They appreciate the help and support they receive and the high quality teaching. They feel they are treated like adults and have good opportunities to develop independence in learning. A minority of students have issues with the strict dress code and the way they are supervised for private study. Inspectors agree with all the positive aspects.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

In Years 7 to 11 and in the sixth form standards are **well above average** and achievement is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results in national tests and examinations are well above average especially at the higher grades.
- Most students passed all their AS and A level examinations with a high proportion of A and B grades in 2004.
- Pupils and students have a readiness to learn which results in very good achievement by the time they leave school.
- Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well.

Commentary

Key Stage 3

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2003¹

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	38.6 (38.2)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	41.7 (40.7)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	39.5 (38.9)	33.6 (33.3)

There were 254 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year

1. Results in national tests in English, mathematics and science, at the end of Year 9 have been consistently well above average for several years. Compared with schools with similar well above average prior attainment results were very high. The results of boys and girls are closer than they are nationally. The school's evaluation shows that girls score higher in English but equally to boys in mathematics and science, borne out by inspection findings.
2. Standards in work seen during the inspection are well above average. As pupils hone their skills and apply their knowledge with greater awareness they are successfully heading towards the well above average standards which the school expects of them. The school's detailed records allow them to predict with confidence that above 90 per cent of pupils will reach Level 5 in all their National Curriculum tests in 2005 and their interpretation of pupils' progress allows them to support pupils who appear to be falling below their target. Inspection evidence supports this view.
3. Through Years 7 to 9 pupils build on their prior attainment. Pupils' own readiness to learn, fostered by their teachers is fundamental to their good achievement. In geography, information and communication technology, music, design and technology and history, where pupils have had less experience of the subjects in primary school, achievement is very good. Their ability to access the written word and to articulate ideas clearly are great strengths in helping them to progress in all their studies. The links with primary schools through the Language College mean many pupils arrive at the school with a facility for language which enables them to take

¹ 2004 validated data is not available

on another language and achieve very well to reach well above average standards by the end of Year 9.

4. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is very good because lessons are adapted to match pupils' individual requirements. All pupils are assessed on entry to Year 7 and clear targets are devised for those who require additional help. Joint planning between teachers and teaching assistants helps pupils to make very good progress.
5. The school has very good arrangements for monitoring pupils with English as an additional language and ensuring that their English is good enough to allow them access to all areas of the curriculum. Currently there is only one pupil in the early stages of acquisition of English, who is well supported, and is making very good progress. Monitoring by the school shows that pupils with English as an additional language do as well as other pupils.

Key Stage 4

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2004

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	86 (77)	52.0 (52)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	97 (92)	89.0 (91)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	99 (98)	96.0 (96)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	46.7 (43)	34.9 (34.7)

There were 249 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

6. GCSE results have been consistently well above average for several years and are rising at a faster rate than are results nationally. In 2004 results rose significantly, though in science the rise from 2003 was small in comparison with the rest of the subjects. The school's detailed analysis of results compared with predictions shows that the most and least able pupils made significant progress, greatly exceeding their targets, but pupils in the middle range exceeded their targets by a smaller amount. Because the school has such comprehensive means of analysing past achievement targets are accurately predicted and in 2004 the target of 87 per cent five A* to C grades was precisely met. The school is confident that pupils are capable of reaching a target of above 90 per cent five A* to C grades in 2005.
7. Standards in work seen during the inspection are overall well above average. The recent introduction of three 'Pathways' means that the most able pupils follow a more demanding route with the option of taking GCSE examinations before the end of Year 11. They are rising very well to the challenges of their courses. A mixed choice of subjects, including work-related courses, with more emphasis on course work than final examination, better suits lower-attaining pupils, including those with special educational needs.
8. Pupils achieve very well because they build on the knowledge and understanding from earlier years. They use what they know to solve problems and answer questions. Pupils' commitment and the strong work ethic contribute significantly to their achievement. Careful monitoring of pupils' progress allows the senior management team to identify where pupils are under-performing so that a planned programme of support and mentoring can be implemented. This is very successful in ensuring that pupils get back on target and fulfil their potential.

Sixth form

9. Results at AS and A level have been well above average for several years. The school's analysis of results shows that students reach their predicted grades and in a small number of subjects, significantly exceed them. Students negotiate targets with their subject teachers and form tutors, the success of which is very evident in the way the highest achievers and the gifted and talented gain places in their chosen university. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above average, indicating that the school will maintain its position in the top third of sixth forms nationally. Sixth form tutors play an essential part in monitoring the progress of their students and directing additional academic support to maintain their very good achievement.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance throughout the school is **above average**. In Years 7 to 11 pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **very good**; in the sixth form they are **excellent**. Pupils' and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' and students' attitudes make strong contributions to the standards they attain and their achievements.
- Pupils and students are polite and self-confident, showing a keen desire to learn.
- The school's ethos and high expectations and the very good range of extra-curricular and sporting activities make a particularly strong contribution to pupils' moral and social development.
- Very good and constructive relationships enable all pupils to demonstrate confidence and self-esteem.

Commentary

10. Pupils have a very good work ethic and determination to succeed. They are very well motivated to take part in school activities. The number of pupils taking part in the wide range of enrichment activities provided, especially in sport, is high and their interest and involvement is very good. Pupils from minority ethnic heritages, and pupils with special educational needs, are fully integrated into the school community. Relationships between pupils and with staff are very good. One important feature of the school is the mutual respect evident between staff and pupils. Pupils are valued for their individuality and helped to do well in as many ways as possible. They respond positively to this and develop during their time at school into confident young people. Pupils are happy to approach members of staff if they are experiencing difficulties with their academic work or having personal problems. There are many opportunities for collaborative or group work to further develop pupils' social skills and they willingly share and support each other in their learning.
11. The school is a socially harmonious community and pupils' social awareness is very good. They are very good ambassadors for the school and make a significant contribution to school life. Provision for pupils' social development is very good and contributes very well to their achievement. The school provides significant opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and develop social understanding. The school council provides good opportunities for pupils to develop their communication skills and make important contributions to the life of the school. Most subjects contribute effectively towards developing pupils' social awareness. For example, pupils work very well together and many opportunities are provided for them to express their views in pair work, group work and general discussion. Pupils are self-confident and are developing very well as responsible members of the community.
12. The distinctive ethos of the school, which is a significant strength, encourages pupils to accept responsibility for their actions and treat everyone with respect. The opportunities for pupils to take the initiative and accept personal responsibility are good. Pupils' moral development is very good. They are well aware of right and wrong actions, have a clear knowledge of what is

expected of them and they respond very well. The school's insistence on high standards of behaviour contributes extremely well to these outcomes. By the time they reach the end of Year 11, they are confident and articulate young people who are able to express their feelings and concerns.

13. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is very good. Pupils state that bullying is unacceptable within the school. Although some concerns were expressed by a small number of pupils and parents about racial harassment, the school's records show that it has dealt with any incidents to the satisfaction of the parents. The school does all it can to deal with disaffected pupils within the school and is prepared to exclude those who do not conform to the rules.
14. The school is very aware of the importance of the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of its pupils and the impact it has on their progress, attitudes and achievement. These aspects are developed effectively through the school's ethos, expectations and wider enrichment and extracurricular provision, as well as through the formal curriculum. For example the citizenship and personal, social and health education programmes provide many opportunities for teaching these aspects of pupils' personal development.
15. The religious education syllabus and its teaching provide excellent opportunities for the spiritual development of pupils, and opportunities exist in most other subjects to enhance this feature of personal development. Pupils have a respect for the beliefs of others and have a clear understanding of them. They reflect on issues of belief and form judgments that enable them to develop insights. Where opportunities are provided for reflection and discussion of spiritual matters, pupils clearly respect the views of others and most are willing to share their thoughts and feelings.
16. Pupils' cultural awareness is good. Pupils are aware of their own cultural heritage and that of others. They demonstrate in their lessons a clear knowledge of other cultures and demonstrate respect and tolerance in their relationships.

Attendance

17. Attendance has remained consistent during the last year. In 2002/03, attendance at 93.7 per cent was above the national average and remained the same in 2003/4. Unauthorised absence in 2003/4 at 0.6 per cent was below the national average. All attendance is properly recorded and procedures meet statutory requirements. The punctuality of pupils is very good in the main school and good in the sixth form.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.7	School data	0.6
National data	6.9	National data	1.1

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

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	1245	71	0
White – Irish	4	0	0
White – any other White background	25	1	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	9	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	6	2	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	6	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	4	1	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Chinese	11	1	0
Any other ethnic group	1	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	341	0	0

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

Sixth form

18. There are very good opportunities in the sixth form for students to take responsibility and develop their leadership skills. Many students assist with teaching physical education lessons in the younger years and they also help with organising and running junior clubs and teams. The sixth form play a significant role in the inter house competitions through training and organising the teams, refereeing the matches and taking practices and rehearsals.
19. Students also have the opportunity to gain the community sports leadership award, which involves leading and organising sports tournaments and competitions in local primary schools. They help each year with organising both the school's own sports day and an annual sports competition for schools in the town.
20. Students make their own applications for the prefect posts and there are currently 100 in the school and small group of prefects also sit on the sixth form council and are active on a committee that liaises between staff and students. Students organise and take part in a wealth of their own initiatives in the sixth form, and these include social events, charity fund raising, the debating society, chess club and a Fair Trade project.

21. There is good provision for sex and drugs education in the sixth form through the sixth form nurse, who also arranges 'Well Man and Well Woman' clinics that students can access confidentially. This is reinforced further through good links with external agencies such as the police and relevant off-timetable events.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a **very good** education. Teaching and learning are overall **very good**, there is a **very good** curriculum and the school offers **very good** care, support and guidance. There is **good** involvement of pupils and **very good** involvement of students in the sixth form. Links with parents, community and other schools are **good**.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning and assessment are **very good** in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form and **good** in Years 7 to 9.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Subject expertise of teachers stimulates and inspires pupils and students.
- Teachers expect the very highest standards of work and behaviour.
- The school provides detailed assessment information for teachers on which to base their lessons.
- Pupils and students are very productive because teachers expect so much of them.
- Pupils and students have very well developed skills of independence.
- Teaching in science lacks the rigour and demands found elsewhere.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 171 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactor y	Unsatisfactor y	Poor	Very Poor
19 (12%)	67 (39 %)	61(35 %)	22 (13 %)	2 (1 %)	0	0

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

22. The school judges teaching and learning to be very good based on the results which pupils gain. Inspection evidence agrees with this overall judgement. The school recognises the quality of teaching as a vital element of its phased approach to improvement and has provided for staff detailed guidance as part of the strategic plan for school improvement. The school rightly identifies excellent subject knowledge and ability, and inspection evidence found this to be the greatest strength in promoting pupils' increased understanding based on acquiring new knowledge. Pupils' capacity for concentration and perseverance comes about as a direct result of teachers' high expectations and the level of challenge in their teaching. Much of the very good learning comes about because of pupils' commitment and application to study.
23. It was because of its stringent analysis of results that the school detected weaknesses in the science department. Following a programme of support in that department unsatisfactory teaching has been eliminated but there are still weaknesses in the level of challenge for pupils

and in the development of literacy, with an over-reliance on worksheets which require too little extended writing. This is very much out of step with the rest of the school where the development of literacy is strong.

24. Because the teaching programmes are carefully planned, pupils with special educational needs learn very well. Individual education plans help teachers match work to pupils' requirements. Teachers and teaching assistants liaise very well so that pupils with a statement of special educational need receive very good support to improve their learning and personal development.

Assessment

25. The assessment of pupils' work is very good in most subjects. In mathematics, science and information and communication technology it is good and in physical education it is satisfactory. Marking is a very good feature. Teachers very skilfully comment about how pupils might improve their work. The school has an excellent electronic system for organising and disseminating assessment information, which is very well managed by the deputy headteacher. Teachers competently handle this information. This is particularly true for pupils in Years 9 to 11. The progress of pupils with special educational needs and those more able pupils is also very effectively monitored by the same system.

Sixth form

26. Students have a real thirst for learning and work in partnership with their teachers in pursuit of high standards. Their independence and willingness to learn outside the classroom are evidence of their commitment to fulfilling their ambition. Teachers bring expert knowledge not only of their subject but of its relevance in the world of work and academia.

Assessment

27. Marking of students' work is very thorough and gives clear guidance on how to improve even further. Very careful and detailed analysis of past work, supported by a recognised information system enables the school to form an accurate picture of students' capabilities. This, supported by very good teaching, means that students gain the grades of which they are capable and thus fulfil their potential.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **very good** throughout the school including the sixth form. There is a **very good** range of extra activities and learning opportunities. Accommodation and resources are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is innovative and flexible in meeting the needs, abilities and aspirations of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented.
- All subjects offer a varied range of enrichment activities.
- The personal, social and health education programme is very good.
- Accommodation is in the process of being refurbished and the completed parts provide a stimulating environment for learning.
- Very highly qualified staff are particularly well deployed and contribute to the breadth and quality of the curriculum.

Commentary

28. All the statutory curriculum requirements are met. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 caters well for their different needs. The most able in Year 9 follow an accelerated (fast track) programme that allows them to take selected GCSEs early. All pupils with additional learning needs have

full access to the curriculum. A large variety of GCSE subjects is provided, with further choices within subjects such as in English and science. In Years 10 and 11, organisation of the pupils into three option groups (Pathways) allows them to make selections that reflect their subject preferences and different learning styles. This is a considerable improvement from the previous inspection.

29. A very good programme of extra curricular activities is enjoyed by many pupils and support for learning outside lessons is excellent. Many teachers help pupils to improve their work through informal help with homework and course-work. Pupils with special educational needs are particularly well supported in their learning. Departments extend pupils' learning through educational visits, fieldwork excursions and programmes of visiting speakers. Year 8 pupils take part in a residential outdoor education programme and there are regular overseas trips. Summer schools and educational visits provide extra challenges for the most able pupils, for example in art and music and there is a range of language related activities such as French and German Exchange, and other language related visits
30. Sporting activities are open to all. Many pupils achieve very well in team games, notably rugby and netball. Opportunities for recreational activities such as dance and aerobics are limited. Pupils' participation in music, drama and art within the school is outstanding. Productions and performances in school and beyond are very well established and of a very high quality. There are numerous visits to theatres, concerts and galleries throughout the year that broaden pupils' experience. Large numbers of pupils belong to school clubs, take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme at the highest levels and participate in charity work.
31. Personal, social and health education, taught as part of citizenship, is very good. Pupils cover a range of topics which contribute very well to their personal development.
32. Accommodation is good overall. The building programme has increased the range of specialist teaching rooms for information and communication technology and modern foreign languages, and other areas of the curriculum benefit from having purpose-built rooms. The issues raised in the last inspection have largely been resolved.
33. Resources are good in most areas, and very good in modern foreign languages, religious education and mathematics. The school is rectifying areas where information and communication technology facilities are limited. Staffing is excellent. The staff is highly qualified and well matched to subjects, and they regard the induction programmes very highly.
34. Provision for pupils with special needs is very good. Pupils' literacy skills improve because of intensive work in small groups at lunchtimes. To gain more flexibility in support the school is to appoint two more teaching assistants. An assessment of the accommodation has taken place but because of the layout of the building access to some teaching areas is not suitable for pupils with mobility difficulties.

Sixth form

35. Students who wish to continue in education after the age of 16 are offered a wide range of high quality A level and vocational courses. There are many additional opportunities for students to extend their subject expertise and develop independent study skills. The school meets the statutory requirement to provide religious education for pupils in Years 12 and 13.
36. Activities that broaden students' experience beyond the taught syllabus are very good. Opportunities for developing skills in leadership within the school are outstanding. Many students give invaluable service to the school as prefects, year council and senate organisers, house leaders and learning mentors to pupils with special educational needs. Through their energy and commitment they regularly raise large amounts of money to support a variety of charities.

37. Students are enthusiastic participants in the school's physical education programme, particularly in team games, and many belong to local academies that boost their sporting prowess to the highest levels. They develop their organisational skills through a sports leadership course and run events for local primary schools.
38. The school's tradition of extensive participation in music and drama, together with visits to theatres and galleries, continues into the sixth form. There are geographical and geological field trips that provide invaluable practical experience. Overseas visits and outings to places of higher education prepare students for the next stage of their education. The debating society flourishes. A great deal of support for learning takes place through personal contact with teachers and planned visits to seminars, lectures and revision courses in many subjects.
39. The quality of accommodation in the sixth form is satisfactory. The availability of a social area in the sixth form area, together with the facility of drop-in computer rooms contributes to the very good ethos.

Care, guidance and support

The care, welfare, health and safety arrangements are **very good**. The provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring is **very good**. The involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is **good in the main school and very good** in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pastoral care is a key strength of the school.
- The arrangements for pupils' welfare are an example of excellent school practice.
- An active School Council and Senate help to gauge pupils' opinions and channel ideas for school improvement.
- Induction procedures are good and new pupils master routines and the complex building very quickly.
- Tutor time is not used systematically and is sometimes wasted.

Commentary

40. The very strong commitment of pastoral staff enables the school to have a fully inclusive approach to helping others in a very supportive and caring community. Pupils confirmed strongly that they have very good relationships with both tutors and teaching staff and feel that they would always have someone to turn to if they were ever worried or troubled. Effective monitoring enables any lack of motivation or difficulty to be detected quickly. Those pupils are helped to resolve issues, improve their work and manage themselves better to improve their performance and quality of school life.
41. The arrangements for child protection and for children in public care are very good and all the requirements are fully met. Welfare facilities are excellent and many staff have had training in first aid. Pupils with serious medical conditions are catered for in an outstanding way and their individual care plans are exemplary. When pupils are ill or injured they receive an excellent level of care and attention from matron. All the risk assessments and routine checking systems for health and safety throughout the school are good. The security arrangements for an open site are also good.
42. Pupils receive good support and guidance in their work and in their personal development by effective use of assessment information. Support and guidance for older pupils is very good. Pupils are helped to be aware of their learning targets and know what to do to achieve higher levels in most subjects. The mentoring arrangements for Year 11 pupils are excellent and help many pupils improve their GCSE grades. Careers education and advice is good for the choice of further study in the sixth form and employment opportunities.

43. The school is interested and acts on the views of pupils. The Student Council and Senate are impressive and representatives were seen making some good suggestions for school improvement. The school conducts surveys to canvass pupils' opinions on various aspects and recently conducted a poll on behaviour to ensure that classroom behaviour was not disrupting learning.
44. Pupils with special educational needs are very well cared for. Because teachers and teaching assistants know pupils very well these good relationships help to build up confidence and self-esteem. Much verbal praise and careful explanation help pupils to know how well they are doing.

Sixth form

45. Students receive very good help and support from both teaching staff and their tutors. Students feel that they get very good advice on how to achieve higher standards and cope with all the pressures. The mentoring programme is excellent. Careers guidance is good. Inspection evidence supports these views.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are **good** and the school is held in high regard locally. Links with the community are **very good** and **good** in the sixth form. Links with schools and colleges are **good** and **good** for the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The majority of parents are very pleased with most aspects of the school's work.
- The new school reports are very good.
- The school has a high profile in the community and has developed many rewarding links to benefit learning.
- Pastoral links with the main partner primary schools are very good and language links are excellent.
- A minority of parents feel that their complaints are not dealt with well.

Commentary

46. The school is very popular and is oversubscribed. The parents' questionnaire analysis indicated an overwhelmingly positive picture of parental satisfaction. They feel strongly that their children enjoy school, are making good progress, they behave well and the teaching is good. Pupils are expected to work hard and are encouraged to become mature. Some parents felt that the school does not sufficiently seek their views and act on them as part of school improvement and would like more involvement. Parental concerns about staff morale and ethos are not warranted. Morale is high and the ethos is very positive.
47. The quality of information is good and parents are kept fully in touch with school news and events. Information about pupils' progress is also good and the new school reports are very individual, well written and give a full picture of progress. There is also a good level of regular parental contact when issues arise and when pupils are commended. Parents appreciate this aspect. Parents are very supportive and raise large sums through the PTA and school fund and attend in large numbers whenever they are invited to school activities.
48. Links with other schools are good. The pastoral links with primary schools are very good and pupils transfer easily and settle quickly. The school's specialist language links with primary schools are excellent and help to develop very positive attitudes to language learning in the wider educational community. Links with other secondary schools are underdeveloped and have little impact on learning. Links with universities and colleges for initial teacher training and for vocational courses are good.

49. The strength of community links was amply demonstrated when the community sponsored the school's specialist status bid. Many local groups use school facilities and adult learning includes language classes and an internet café for senior citizens. Pupils deliberately choose local charities to support and raise large sums for. This year 'Mountain Rescue in the Dales' is being supported. Personal development special days bring in many local specialists and expertise and enliven learning. Local places of interest are visited and enrich learning very well. Links with businesses are good for vocational subjects and work experience but are underdeveloped elsewhere across the curriculum.
50. Parents and carers of pupils with special educational needs show a keen interest in their children's development and because of this they always attend the annual reviews. In order to strengthen parental links further the special educational needs co-ordinator is in the process of setting up a parent support programme. There are close relationships with primary schools and consequently the transition from one school to another is very smooth.

Sixth form

51. Links with the community are good for extending learning in business studies and leisure and recreation courses and for supporting Young Enterprise programmes – and the school won the local Enterprise Championship. The 'Learning to Lead' scheme offers some opportunities for leadership but few students are involved. Students say they would like more worthwhile opportunities to do more community service and for work experience to extend their personal development.
52. Links with other schools, colleges and universities are very good. The Higher Education Convention planned shortly is an exciting prospect and has enabled some good links with some top universities.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Governance is **good**. Leadership and management are **very good**. Leadership and management of the sixth form are **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership by the headteacher is very effective in raising standards.
- Leadership in the sixth form is very effective in raising standards.
- The massive variety of students' needs in the very large sixth form is met very effectively.
- Management is extremely clear about planning for change and developments for the future.
- Management produces very consistent assessment information which is used effectively to monitor and support pupils' improvement.

Commentary

53. The quality of leadership by the headteacher is very good. He has vision for raising standards in the school and improving its learning ethos. The school's planning for improvement is very detailed. It is carefully prepared to have the maximum and quickest effect on raising standards. The whole of the school's staff are very well motivated. This is because they have been involved in the school's recent development. For instance, the teaching staff has contributed significantly to the creative development of the curriculum, which was very effectively driven by the headteacher. Staff approve of the radical improvements made in pupils' behaviour, school uniform and the décor of the buildings that now make the school an enjoyable environment in which to work.
54. The senior management's production of the large quantity of high quality evaluative assessment information gives an accurate picture of all pupils' progress and results have improved. Teaching and learning are better than at the last inspection. The robust school development plan indicates that teaching and learning are set to be evaluated more closely in

the continuing drive for improved standards. Members of the senior management group work very closely as a team in implementing ambitious change and monitoring its effects. New teachers to the school benefit significantly from the well-planned comprehensive programme of induction. Part of this programme has recently been delivered by a consortium of Harrogate schools. The continuing professional development of staff is satisfactory. It is largely provided within the school because of financial constraints. Performance management is proceeding efficiently and promoting the school's aims for improvement. Leadership is strong in most departments. Managers are confident and share a sense of purpose with teams, effectively maintaining or raising standards. Most departments monitor performance systematically.

55. The special educational needs co-ordinator has a clear vision of support for learning and because of this the school has gained the Special Needs Quality Mark. A further aim is to gain recognition as a dyslexia friendly school. There is sharing of good practice with the team of teaching assistants. The designated governor has a good understanding of special educational needs.

Governance

56. The governing body is competent and committed to the school's vision of higher standards. Governors, however, are not yet sufficiently influential to drive initiatives forward and rely on the headteacher for direction. The governing body is working to ensure that the school meets all its statutory responsibilities. The school does not hold a daily act of collective worship but has recently developed a consultation paper and has plans to rectify this omission. Governors are keen to understand and expedite their roles and the committee structures are working well to support and to challenge the work of the school. Subject link governors have been appointed recently but have not had the opportunity to be part of subject evaluations.

Sixth form

57. The quality of leadership in the sixth form is excellent. The head of sixth form has excellent vision for guiding and supporting the older students through their final years in the school. The very rigorous system for the continual monitoring of students' progress has led to results rising and achievement improving. Tutors, and the heads of Years 12 and 13, act as a strong and cohesive team in this, and all other matters. Teachers must apply to be sixth form tutors because of leadership's perception that particular qualities are required for this specialist post. Good leadership is strengthening long-term planning by the introduction of the International Baccalaureate. This is a highly influential feature in attracting other students to the school.
58. Future needs for the development of the sixth form are being met by the prospective appointment of a third assistant head of sixth form. This will allow further enhancement of the sixth form provision as this teacher will jointly oversee the need to improve the accommodation and to increase the provision of computers. Departments manage sixth form work very well as an extension of the rest of their provision. Students apply to be prefects who, when appointed, work closely with staff when carrying out their delegated duties.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	6,428,163	Balance from previous year	367,213
Total expenditure	6,500,560	Balance carried forward to the next	294,816
Expenditure per pupil	3,923		

59. Finances are managed efficiently and effectively. Deployment of resources is clearly to priorities in the school's development plan and the school knows the costs of developments. The headteacher and governors have sufficient information to be sure finances are in good order. Best value principles are applied and local education authority guidelines followed. The school provides very good value for money.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

Work-related learning

Provision for work related learning is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The system used to arrange work experience results in a very good match between placements and pupils' interests.
- Monitoring of work-related learning is not yet systematic.
- An innovative business studies programme has good links with local businesses and is popular with pupils.

Commentary

60. All pupils have a work experience placement in Year 10. The school provides support but encourages pupils to organise their own placements. This results in pupils experiencing work placements that match their own interests. The school uses the Connexions service and pupils report that they find the career advice helpful. Careers education and work related elements such as job awareness form part of the planned personal, social and health education and citizenship course in all years. The business studies department has established very good business links (e.g. with MacDonald's and Betty's) and organises its own equivalent of Young Enterprise. This is very popular with pupils. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The school meets the statutory requirements but has not yet appointed a curriculum leader for work-related learning. Accordingly, monitoring of the quality and balance of provision is underdeveloped.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Overall, the quality of provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning, together with pupils' positive attitudes, result in very good achievement and standards that are well above average.
- The department makes very effective use of school assessment information and marking to monitor pupils' progress.
- In some lessons not enough emphasis is placed on finding out from pupils what they have learned.
- New courses in Years 10 and 11 are catering very successfully for the needs of different groups of pupils.
- Very good leadership and teamwork in this large department have a positive impact on the maintenance of standards.

Commentary

61. Pupils achieved very well in the Year 9 national tests in 2004. Over 90 per cent of the year group gained Level 5 or higher. Standards in 2003 were well above the national average and well above the average for schools with similar prior attainment, with boys and girls achieving more highly than boys and girls did nationally. In the 2004 GCSE examinations in language and literature, the 100 per cent pass rate gained in 2003 at A* to G was sustained and the numbers of pupils gaining grades A* to C were higher than in the previous year. The difference in achievement of boys and girls was less than what is usually found nationally. However, the literature results are under review because the proportion of grades at A* was much lower than in language.
62. Pupils enter the school with standards that are well above average. They develop their knowledge and understanding of English in a very effective way so that they reach high standards in examinations in Year 9 and Year 11. In Year 9 standards are well above average and most pupils take an active part in discussion with an awareness of other people's points of view. In reading they are aware of different layers of meaning and they know how to organise and summarise information from a variety of sources. Pupils' writing shows a good grasp of spelling patterns and a firm knowledge of sentence structure and appropriate punctuation. Pupils write in a lively way for a wide range of purposes and they use information and communication technology very effectively for research and to present their work. Higher attaining pupils write confidently at considerable length and pupils with special educational needs organise their information well when they receive help in structuring their responses. Pupils with English as an additional language cope well with the work of the lesson. All pupils, including those with special educational needs, English as an additional language and the gifted and talented achieve very well.
63. In Year 11 standards are well above average. Achievement in speaking and listening is very good. When explaining the emotional impact of well-chosen imagery, higher attaining pupils speak with eloquence and sensitivity and fellow pupils listen very attentively. Pupils balance different arguments skilfully in discussions and lower attaining pupils explain their ideas with reasonable clarity. Standards of reading and comprehension are well above average. Pupils are confident in reading aloud and in analysing extracts from their set texts. They are adept at identifying the different themes that link together a group of poems and they are well aware of different literary techniques. Standards of writing are well above average. Most pupils write

with careful attention to paragraphing and syntax. Spelling is generally accurate and the range of vocabulary is wide. Pupils redraft their work to good effect. Handwriting is clear and presentation is usually very good. The writing of the highest attaining pupils is very lucid and style is varied to suit the subject.

64. The quality of teaching and learning is very good, and most lessons contain some excellent features. Pupils of all levels of attainment are keen to respond because of the mutual trust that exists in the classroom. They acquire skills, knowledge and understanding very effectively because teachers have a very firm command of the subject and a great enthusiasm for it. Consequently most pupils apply themselves promptly to the task in hand and work very responsibly both independently and in groups. There is generally little difference in the achievement of girls and boys. The most effective lessons are characterised by precise explanations of what is required, together with very careful lesson planning which takes into account the particular needs of the pupils in the class and ensures steady progression in developing knowledge and skills. Pupils' comments at the end of the session give teachers a clear idea of how well the lesson objectives have been achieved. However, in some lessons not enough emphasis is placed on finding out from pupils what they have learned. The marking of pupils' work is a strength of the department. Pupils know exactly how well they are achieving and receive very detailed advice on how to move to the next level of attainment.
65. Leadership of the subject is very good. Leaders are very good role models for other staff and pupils. There is an impressive clarity of vision together with a very firm sense of purpose and the large department constitutes a very efficient and effective team. Management is very good. Responsibilities are well distributed and reporting systems ensure that progress in the development of the curriculum and of professional expertise is carefully monitored and recorded. The strategy for promoting language and literacy across the whole curriculum is very efficiently organised. It is now well embedded and is effective in raising standards. The development of a fast track course for higher attaining pupils in Year 9 and the introduction of a media studies course in Years 10 and 11 are evidence of the successful way in which departmental self-evaluation and school data are used to identify groups of pupils in need of more appropriate programmes of study. Resources are good but there are weaknesses in the accommodation in that the department office is too cramped. There is insufficient space for books, papers and equipment and for the numbers of people who use it. In addition, some of the rooms in the sixth form area are too small for the large classes using them. Good progress has been made since the last inspection when standards were already high. Teaching in Years 7 to 11 has improved and the curriculum has been broadened in response to need. The programme of enrichment makes a strong contribution to the very good opportunities available for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

66. The school makes very good provision to support the development of pupils' literacy skills, and standards in speaking, reading and writing are well above average. In all subjects there is an emphasis on correct use of technical language and pupils express themselves very clearly in pair and class discussions, in describing their practical work in subjects such as information and communication technology, music and design technology, and also in their drama presentations. Pupils acquire very good reading skills. They read aloud expressively and are keen to borrow books on a wide range of subjects from the library. The success of the annual *Readathon* competition, promoted by the English department, is evidence of their interest in private reading. During their library lessons in Year 7 pupils become adept at retrieving information efficiently from a variety of sources, and they continue to develop this skill as they move through the school. Pupils generally have very good opportunities to develop their extended writing. Notable strengths in writing were observed in English, history and geography, and in business studies pupils also show a clear understanding of concepts. In science, however, although standards of spelling are consistently high there is insufficient scope for extended writing, and there is not enough reinforcement of key words in information and communication technology.

Modern foreign languages

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve high standards at GCSE in French, German and Spanish.
- Teaching is very good because excellent subject knowledge, enthusiasm and varied methods promote the very good achievement of all pupils.
- Excellent leadership and management ensure that standards continue to rise.
- Specialist Language College status has improved accommodation and resources and enabled the school to provide an extensive and imaginative range of courses.
- Assessment procedures are very good, except that marking does not consistently provide guidance on how to improve.

Commentary

67. Teachers' assessments in 2003 for French show that pupils reached standards well above national expectations. There was further improvement in 2004. Girls did better than boys, but by less than nationally. GCSE results in 2003 at grades A* to C were well above average in French and German. 2004 results in French, German and Spanish were very high, continuing an upward trend. The percentage of pupils gaining A* and A grades was well above average. In 2004, 26 pupils from Year 10 gained these higher grades. There is no significant difference between boys and girls.
68. Inspection evidence shows very good achievement and standards above expectations in French by the end of Year 9. This applies to all pupils because teachers successfully match work to prior attainment, accelerating higher attainers and ensuring that most lower attainers and pupils with special educational needs reach average standards. Consequently, all pupils understand and apply different tenses and give opinions routinely. All pupils study Spanish, German or Italian in Years 8 and 9, with most exceeding expectations in a second language.
69. By the end of Year 11, standards in French, German and Spanish are well above expectations. Some pupils study French at AS level in Year 11. Achievement is very good. Higher attainers speak confidently, with good pronunciation. Very good recall of vocabulary and structures supports well-developed listening and reading skills and enables pupils to participate successfully in role plays and conversations. Many pupils write imaginatively on a range of topics, showing outstanding knowledge of tenses, and adding creative touches of their own. In all years, pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds do as well as others.
70. The quality of teaching and learning is very good, never less than good, and occasionally excellent. Teachers use their excellent subject knowledge to establish high expectations, conducting lessons almost entirely in the foreign language and promoting high standards in listening. Teachers transmit their enthusiasm for languages to pupils, whose own very positive attitudes contribute significantly to their progress. The resources made available through specialist Language College status are used very effectively to vary teaching methods and engage pupils, who appreciate opportunities to use the language laboratory, the information and communication technology suite and electronic whiteboards. Teachers match work to pupils' prior attainment, based on very good assessment procedures, and encourage independent learning skills, for example in group oral work and through internet research. Open-ended tasks in homework provide further opportunities for experimentation. The weakness in teaching is the failure to use marking as a means of providing guidance to assist future learning. Work in the subject improves literacy very well.
71. The Language College director provides excellent leadership. He receives excellent support from his assistant and other post holders to manage the work of an exceptionally large department. Procedures for monitoring and self-evaluation are very thorough, and support outstanding curricular planning, with clear vision for the future development of language

learning. The range of provision for feeder schools supports this vision. Deployment of staff, including five foreign language assistants, is effective in improving learning. Teachers share good practice and all feel valued for their individual contributions within an effective team. The range of extra-curricular activities is very good, although there is scope for more extensive foreign links to further enthuse pupils. Since the previous inspection the acquisition of Language College status has underpinned very good improvement, especially in resources. There is very good capacity to sustain the improving trend in results.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well and make good progress.
- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge shows in high expectations with realistic levels of challenge.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning and relationships in class are very good.
- The limited range of teaching approaches includes good questioning skills.
- Assessment for learning is less well developed in Years 7 to 9 than higher up the school.

Commentary

72. Based on the assessments at the end of Year 6, the attainment of pupils on entry in 2003 was above average and more pupils than average had attained the higher level. In the tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003, results were very high and showing a steady upward trend over recent years. In 2003 GCSE results at A* to C grades were well above the national average. This represents good achievement overall. In work seen standards throughout the school are well above average.
73. Teaching is good. Teachers, for example, get pupils thinking mathematically as soon as they enter the classroom by giving them problems to work out as they settle into the lesson. Excellent subject knowledge helps teachers plan well so as to develop pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding at a good pace. Many teachers have good questioning strategies which they use to great effect in promoting learning. Typically they lead pupils along a carefully planned learning path. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' achievement, behaviour and presentation. This leads to pupils receiving a lot of encouragement which supports learning in most lessons. Carefully structured lessons are a feature of the good teaching in the department but planning and delivery are not consistent across the department. Pupils' application and enjoyment are generally high.
74. Learning is good and in nearly half the lessons in Years 10 and 11 it is very good. Without exception pupils bring a very good attitude to learning into the classroom. Pupils are treated with respect and encouraged to do their best with their contributions being well received, even when not correct. The very good pupil-teacher relationships are a major contributor to the high outcomes achieved and pupils make good progress in their learning. Their knowledge, skills and understanding develop at a good pace because teaching is well structured; explanations are clear and teachers model well how pupils should set out their work. Pupils respond particularly well to stimulating teaching and much focused questioning by the teacher. They deepen their learning by sparking ideas, listening to and questioning each other. Even, on the infrequent occasion when teaching is dull and uninteresting, pupils respond positively. The large majority of pupils, including those with special educational needs, are conscientious and engage willingly in their work. They take a pride in their work, including its appearance and presentation.
75. There are some weaknesses in teaching. These occur when activities are not well chosen to match the pupils' learning needs, there is an over-long explanation or when the teaching lacks pace and urgency. Pupils then lose concentration and pace of learning is reduced.

76. Teachers are aware of their pupils' targets and plan work accordingly. Pupils know the level that they have attained as the department uses a good range of assessments and monitors pupils' progress. Pupils and parents are regularly informed of progress but those below Year 9 are less aware of the levels at which they are working. Marking follows the department system but only very rarely gives constructive comments which would help pupils to improve to meet their target.
77. The leadership of the department is very good and management is good. As illustrated in the department self-evaluation document, the head of department has high aspirations for pupils and leads the efforts of his team to raise standards well. There are very good role models for teaching in the department and staff do share ideas but their skills are not yet effectively shared so inconsistencies in teaching occur. Even though the department results at GCSE in 2004 were the highest ever, staff are not complacent. Monitoring of teaching is systematic and leads the school. It has led to some weaknesses being resolved but it is still at an early stage and does not yet ensure best teaching is consistently adopted by all staff. Staff development is crucially needed to bring all teachers up to best practice seen. The range of extra-curricular activities which serves to raise the aspirations of pupils and support those approaching examinations is good.
78. The department has made very good progress since the last inspection. The range of teaching styles in the majority of lessons has broadened and teaching is less didactic. Assessment has improved and is now good in Years 10 and 11. Results have continued to rise.

Mathematics across the curriculum

79. Mathematics across the curriculum is good. The large majority of pupils enter school with confidence in number and many prefer to use mental calculation which they do successfully. They use a range of numeracy skills well when required, for instance in English in Years 7 to 9 good use of statistics and ratio to bring home to pupils the enormous casualty rate among the Vietnamese population. In science in Years 7 to 9 pupils analyse variables on graphs while in Years 10 and 11 they find line of best fit.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at the end of Year 9 and Year 11 are well above the national average.
- Teaching does not always challenge every pupil.
- Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good.
- The range of learning and teaching strategies is limited.
- Assessment is well used to monitor pupils' progress.
- Pupils have little opportunity to reflect and comment on their progress.

Commentary

80. In 2003 pupils' standards in national tests in Year 9 were well above the national average. When these results are compared to schools where attainment on entry three years before was similar they show very good achievement. The standards of work seen during the inspection for pupils in Year 9 are well above the national average and achievement is good.
81. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2003 were well above the national average. The overall proportion of pupils gaining a higher grade in a science subject was, however, significantly below that of mathematics and English. When compared to schools where attainment at the start of Year 10 is similar, the GCSE results show unsatisfactory achievement. The science department has taken a number of decisive actions to raise achievement in Years 10 and 11. These actions are having an impact and inspection evidence shows that achievement is now

satisfactory. The achievement of boys and girls is similar. Support for pupils with special educational needs is effective and they make satisfactory progress in their learning.

82. Teaching and learning are satisfactory with good teaching in some lessons. Teachers have good subject knowledge, provide clear explanations and balance this with careful questioning. The good lessons have clear objectives and are well matched to pupils' needs. The context is also stimulating and captures pupils' interest; methods chosen involve them directly in learning and developing their understanding. Positive relationships between teachers and pupils help build the confidence of pupils who have very good attitudes to learning. Teaching is less effective when lesson planning does not take account of the ability of all pupils leading to unchallenging tasks being set and a lack of pace in learning. Teaching strategies used in these lessons are also limited and do not actively engage pupils in learning. There is too much reliance on teachers giving lengthy explanations followed by pupils being asked to complete short answer questions. In these lessons there is also little opportunity for pupils to evaluate their own learning and so they are not always clear about what they need to do next to improve.
83. The leadership of the department is satisfactory. Recent beneficial changes in leadership have provided clearer lines of responsibility and a sharper focus on improving teaching and learning. Curriculum changes in Years 10 and 11 are also beginning to impact on achievement. Management of the department is good. The systems used to monitor pupils' progress are effective and a new system of monitoring teachers' work is being introduced. Through an effective system of self-monitoring and evaluation the head of science has a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the department and a good plan for improvement has been developed.
84. Improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for Information and communication technology (ICT) is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are confident and competent users of computers in both key stages.
- There is a good working atmosphere in lessons, and pupils work well with each other.
- Teachers have an excellent command of the subject, which leads to pupils making good progress in lessons.
- Teamwork in the department is very good, and this contributes to the very good behaviour seen in lessons.
- Teachers do not always question pupils intensively enough to help them fully understand the concepts being taught.
- Accommodation and resources are good, and teachers use the resources well in lessons.

Commentary

85. Standards are well above national expectations. In 2003 ninety eight per cent of pupils at the end of Year 9 gained a Level 5 or above, and this standard was maintained in 2004. In Year 11, all pupils passed the GNVQ examination.
86. Achievement is very good in Years 7 to 11 because the department ensures that pupils know what level they are working at and understand how to improve. Pupils' achievement in Years 10 and 11 is very good, especially given that they have not enjoyed the benefits of the foundation work now undertaken in Years 7 to 9. Also, the pupils who passed the GNVQ examination were in a low ability group. There is very good progress in the acquisition of skills. For example, a low ability group in Year 7 quickly learnt how to use a slide outline tool.

87. The department provides satisfactory support for pupils with special educational needs, with a support teacher present in some classes, and advanced worksheets being made available where appropriate.
88. Teaching and learning are good in all years, and learning is very good in Years 10 and 11 because of both teachers' expertise and very good relationships in the classroom. Teachers share the objectives of the lesson with the pupils, and move on to the next stage of the lesson very smoothly. Teachers use a variety of methods and make good use of resources, and pupils tend to be very articulate and able to grasp concepts quickly. However, teachers do not question deeply enough, and this both limits the extent to which teachers are able to check pupils' understanding and to extend the pupils' knowledge as fully as possible. However, diagnostic assessment procedures are being developed across all years, which will help to ensure that pupils' work is assessed consistently.
89. The inspection findings agree with the department's own self-evaluation in that its leadership and management are very good. The head of department has a clear vision of the development of ICT in the school. He fosters a corporate spirit and high levels of teamwork which have led to the high standards seen. Monitoring of achievement and lesson observation take place, resulting in greater consistency of teaching across the department.
90. The school has a strong commitment to ICT: there is extensive provision to meet the needs of all pupils, and pupils use the computers during four lunchtimes a week. Also, pupils in Years 7 to 11 now have an ICT lesson for an average of one hour per week. Consequently, pupils are developing a foundation of ICT skills that they can apply in other subjects. Accommodation and resources are good, with a range of facilities available, including a set of wireless laptops for use by other teachers, and an electronic whiteboard and several data projectors in the department.
91. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. A new department was established in 2003, enabling the National Strategy in ICT for Key Stage 3 to be adopted, resulting in the high standards seen.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

92. The use of ICT across the school is good. Departmental schemes of work include areas where ICT may be used, and so pupils are able to apply their ICT skills to enhance their learning in other subjects. For example, all mathematics classes must use ICT for some of the units in order to develop pupils' understanding of particular concepts. Several departments have their own computer facilities which they use to good effect. For example, the use of ICT in modern foreign languages is very good, whilst in history the subscription to an online service provides resources which support the department's aim of developing pupils' critical appraisal skills. However, some departments, such as geography, physical education and design technology do not have access to the full range of ICT resources they require. The school also has a network manager and a technician, which helps ensure the smooth-running of the facilities.

HUMANITIES

History

Provision in history is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards achieved by pupils are very good.
- Committed and very knowledgeable teachers inspire confidence and enthusiasm from pupils.
- The detailed and accurate departmental evaluation identifies a need to continue to develop more consistent marking, especially in Years 7 and 8.
- Pupils benefit from varied teaching styles and the use of a wide range of visits and visitors.
- The excellent leadership of the head of department results in a cohesive department with a commitment to achieve very high standards.

Commentary

93. Standards are very high. Pupils enter the school with above average skills in reading and writing but with a more limited grasp of history. The well-taught and interesting course soon rectifies this. In 2003 the standards at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average. Similar standards were achieved in 2004 and were seen on the inspection. The achievement of these pupils, including those with Statements of Educational Need, is very good. Boys perform slightly less well than girls but the difference is much smaller than occurs nationally. In Years 10 and 11 very good teaching, supported by the very positive attitude of pupils, builds on the previous high achievement. In 2003, results at GCSE in this popular subject were well above average, with all pupils obtaining pass grades and 77 per cent reaching the higher A* to C grades. Results in 2004 were even better and the gap between the performance of boys and girls closed. In 2004, a third of the pupils obtained the highest A*/A grades. This represents very good achievement. Current work is of a similarly very high standard. The key strength is that pupils use highly developed writing skills to produce thoughtful and sophisticated answers based on extremely detailed knowledge supported by mature understanding.
94. Teaching and learning are very good overall. The main strengths in the teaching are enthusiasm for the subject together with a willingness to try a range of approaches. There are well-designed topics that make good use of computers. In one Year 7 lesson on William the Conqueror there was a buzz of anticipation as the teacher went to a cupboard "because she always brings out something interesting." Lessons involve a range of activities and are full of challenge, which makes the subject interesting for pupils. They become very good at providing extended answers, so that high quality becomes a habit rather than a chore. Pupils make informed links between different times and events and this consistently features in the high standards of work produced. Detailed marking in Years 9 to 11 provides pupils with clear advice on how to improve. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 do not consistently receive this and some are not clear what they need to do to improve their work.
95. Leadership is excellent. The head of department supports her energetic department in seeking to achieve excellence. Differing teaching approaches are shared and the department has recently completed a very detailed and accurate evaluation of strengths and areas for development. Management is very good. There is now a focus on improved consistency and detail in marking in Years 7 and 8. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good.

Geography

The overall provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards of work are well above average and GCSE results continue to improve.

- Teachers' very good subject knowledge and supportive relationships with pupils lead to very good achievement.
- Very good leadership and management promote high expectations and very effective teamwork.
- Enquiry activities and fieldwork make very good contributions to pupils' independent learning.
- Procedures for marking pupils' work and setting targets for improvement are not applied consistently in Years 7 to 9.

Commentary

96. In the GCSE examination in 2003, results were significantly above the national average. There was very little difference between girls' and boys' results. Boys performed particularly well compared with boys nationally. In 2004, results improved for both girls and boys, particularly at the highest grades.
97. Standards of work seen during the inspection are well above the national average by the end of Year 9. Pupils enter the school with a wide range of geographical experience. They achieve very well, particularly in Year 9 as they apply their earlier learning and skills. The most capable pupils are able to speak confidently and write fluently about current geographical issues. Their ability to use statistics to explain geographical patterns, such as differences in levels of development throughout the world, is very good. Pupils with special educational needs are very well supported, enabling them to achieve as well as others.
98. In Years 10 and 11, a high proportion of pupils opt to study geography. Standards of work are well above average, particularly in Year 11. Achievement is very good, enhanced by the department's rigorous assessment systems which ensure that all pupils are entered for the most appropriate examination level. The very high standards achieved in fieldwork and course work are particularly helpful in enabling boys to improve their final examination grade.
99. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Experienced teachers use their detailed and up-to-date knowledge to plan lessons that result in very rapid learning for all pupils. Very good relationships between teachers and pupils promote an atmosphere of mutual respect in which pupils' ideas can be discussed freely, for example in their understanding of earthquake and volcanic activity. Practical activities and investigations help pupils to work independently. In a small proportion of lessons, insufficient planning, challenge and variety of learning activities limit pupils' achievement. Access to information and computer technology is restricted in lessons but very well used for research and to present high quality investigations. Although most marking is regular and thorough, assessment systems in Years 7 to 9 do not always show pupils the levels they have reached in relation to national standards or how to improve their work.
100. The department's process of self-evaluation concluded that leadership and management are very good. Findings from this inspection support this. There is a shared vision within the team for further success and a constant striving for continued improvement. Very efficient organisation, monitoring performance and taking effective action have resulted in continued and very good improvement since the last inspection.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards in GCSE examinations are high.

- Teachers' excellent use of discussion and questioning enables pupils to express their opinions and form clear judgements about religious and moral issues.
- The monitoring of teachers' and pupils' work is very well developed.
- Leadership and management of the subject are excellent and this ensures that pupils are provided with a very rich curriculum.

Commentary

101. Standards in the GCSE course in 2003 were high. Over 90 per cent of pupils achieved A* to C and over 70 per cent were awarded A* and A, an outstanding result. In the short course GCSE in 2003, 84 per cent of pupils achieved A* to C. This increased in 2004 to 89 per cent, an excellent result.
102. By Year 9, standards are well above average in relation to the local education authority agreed syllabus. There are many good examples of pupils achieving very well in developing knowledge and understanding of religious language, principles and concepts. Their skills of investigation and interpretation are very well developed. They are able to link their knowledge of religion with their everyday experiences. The use of key words, subject specific language and discussion enable pupils to improve their speaking and listening skills. All pupils achieve very well.
103. By Year 11, standards in the work seen are well above average. Pupils extend their knowledge and understanding of how they can learn from religion. They are developing their skills of analysis and evaluation very well. They make very good gains in their knowledge and understanding of religious concepts. Their achievement is very good because they can apply their learning to new situations. They are able to question and explore their own attitudes in great depth because the teaching enables them to develop independence in their learning.
104. Teaching and learning are very good and make a very clear contribution to pupils' very good achievement. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is very good because pupils are provided with good support and work that matches their needs. The use of key words and subject specific language enable pupils to improve their speaking and listening skills. Pupils make very good progress as a result of the teachers' excellent knowledge of the subject and an awareness of individual pupil's needs. The teachers' very good use of a range of effective teaching methods, coupled with clear expectations and challenge enables all pupils to make very good gains in their knowledge and understanding of religious and moral issues. Homework is very well used to allow for individual research and to extend pupils' understanding. The assessment procedures have improved since the last inspection. They provide a very clear basis for assessing what pupils know and understand and pupils are clear from the detailed comments in their books about what they need to do to improve.
105. Curriculum leadership is outstanding and innovative, with a clear sense of purpose and direction. The head of the department approaches the task with enthusiasm and commitment. She has been very successful in developing a strong team approach, and is very well supported by two other teachers, both of whom are specialists. The monitoring of the work of teachers and pupils is very well developed. The subject is managed in an excellent way and this is reflected in the quality of religious education provided for the pupils.
106. Pupils' spiritual and moral awareness is extremely strong. They demonstrate a deep respect for the views, faiths and traditions of each other. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Current standards seen are well above average in all areas.
- Expert knowledge of the teachers promotes very good learning.
- Independent learning is well established and helps pupils develop skills and interests within the subject.
- Pupils show very good behaviour, attitude and the ability to work independently and collaboratively.

Commentary

107. GCSE results at A* to C were well above average in 2003. Results for 2004 show a steep rise in standards. Current standards seen in Year 9 are well above average and represent very good achievement as pupils join Year 7 with average standards in this subject. Teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 are accurate and show well above average standards. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 show well above average standards and represent very good achievement. This is made possible by very good teaching and learning, very good teamwork and an active, shared teaching and learning agenda. The overall profile of standards indicates a trend of rising standards. In all areas, pupils make particularly good progress as a result of very good teaching linked to the objectives in the GCSE or the National Curriculum programmes of study.
108. Teaching and learning are very good in all years with some excellent features. Features of the very good lessons are the variety of tasks, which creates opportunities for pupils to develop their own ideas and test, model and make. Products that pupils make are greatly treasured as they are highly individual and a development of their ideas, not those of the teachers. This also fosters a climate of independence, motivation and interest in materials, ideas and products. Pupils show a very positive attitude to learning in this area and enjoy the lessons and behave very well. Schemes of work encourage innovation and individuality. The work seen in Year 7 computer aided design and manufacture is excellent with highly imaginative teaching and very high standard products made.
109. The department self review highlights issues of resources and accommodation that were affecting the quality of provision; these were reviewed during the inspection. Computer aided designing and manufacturing are insufficient, due to the lack of appropriate equipment. Information and communication technology access and provision are insufficient. The small workshop presents many problems for both teachers and learners and is too small for the groups that presently use it. The hot metal area is also inadequate for safe and effective use.
110. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The head of department has a vision that is shared by the team of teachers. Very good sharing of ideas and skills takes place and the active encouragement of learning from each other is very evident. Very good systems are in place for assessment, reporting and target setting.
111. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Sustained improvements in standards and achievement have been made in all years. Teaching and learning is better than during the last inspection. The department is well placed for future development and further success.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Provision in art is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very high and GCSE results are excellent.
- Teachers' high level of demand leads pupils to achieve very well.
- The assessment and academic monitoring of pupils are excellent.
- Very good leadership shows a clear vision for the development of the subject.
- There are insufficient specialist teaching rooms.

Commentary

112. The results of the 2004 teachers' assessments in Year 9 were well above average; standards in the current Year 9 are above expectations. Pupils' attainment on entry is average. The very good progress made in Years 7 to 9 is due to the challenging tasks set by teachers and their expectations that high standards will be achieved. All pupils reach a high technical standard of handling the formal elements of art in most strands of the subject. They also have a good knowledge of the work of artists and sound understanding of how other cultures use imagery for different purposes. The most able pupils are helped to make very good progress by the many opportunities to learn through independent enquiry.
113. The GCSE results in 2003 were above average. Results in 2004 saw a dramatic improvement as nearly all the pupils gained the higher grades A* to C. The course is more popular with girls; nearly half of those entered gained A* and A grades in 2004. Pupils develop very effective understanding of a working method that starts with researching topics in sketchbooks. Pupils then select the best ideas and through a careful process of refinement produce very high quality coursework. All pupils are helped to achieve very well and to reach very high standards by the extremely rich sets of examples that line the walls in all the studios.
114. Teaching and learning are very good, especially on the GCSE course. This explains why standards and achievement are as they are. Varied and ambitious tasks are explained in ways that pupils understand and this allows them to learn in clearly defined incremental steps. All teachers know their pupils very well and support them very well with individual attention. All pupils get help or advice that is based on teachers' very good subject knowledge. Pupils respond very well to the teachers' high expectations and consequently attitudes are very positive. Pupils enjoy visits to art galleries. Their subsequent outcomes show that they have learnt how to evaluate the work of artists and then use these influences effectively. Teachers have undergone professional training in the use of computers for producing electronically derived artwork. The department's intranet site allows pupils to learn about standards from examples of work in the "gallery". Assessment is thorough and rigorous. All pupils have their progress checked by regularly updated records. They are set challenging targets. In Years 10 and 11 all pupils have interviews that indicates how well they are doing. The teacher and pupil agree ways of pursuing further improvement.
115. The department is very well led and managed. The experienced head of subject has created an excellent team by his approach to the individuals in it. The views of all teachers are sought and valued, particularly when the departmental self-evaluation takes place. Consequently, the subject leader has an accurate picture of what needs to be done to move it forward in the future. The management of allocating teachers to rooms is difficult because there are often five teachers for four specialist areas. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. Teaching, learning and achievement have all improved and GCSE results are significantly better.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The high quality teaching captures pupils' interest.
- The imaginative curriculum presents pupils with a very wide diet of musical experiences.

- GCSE results are well above average with many A* and A grades.
- There is an outstanding range of extra curricular activities.
- Teacher assessments and the monitoring of teaching are not fully in place.

Commentary

116. The teacher assessments and GCSE results in 2003 and 2004 were well above average with no significant difference in the attainment of boys and girls.
117. The standards of work seen in Years 9 and 11 are well above average. This represents very good achievement since the majority of pupils enter Year 7 with average musical skills. Standards are high because of an extensive curriculum including the use of the newly arrived computers. The lively teaching has caught pupils' imagination and motivation is very high.
118. In Years 7 to 9 teaching is very challenging. Because of probing questions pupils answer with confidence and understanding. Consequently firm foundations are laid which benefit future examination work. Singing and rhythm work, staff and solfa notations, jazz improvisations and world music projects are all taught in a stimulating way. As a result learning is of a high standard and pupils of all abilities make very good progress. They also have positive attitudes and behave very well. Whilst assessment takes place there is no moderation of levels done together by all teachers.
119. Very good teaching in Years 10 and 11 leads to a strong commitment from pupils to work hard and make very good progress. The large number of pupils playing instruments and taking part in the wide range of musical activities ensures a very broad and balanced musical diet. This compliments pupils' compositions and written work to give a solid basis for reaching the higher grades in the GCSE examination. The standard of assessment and self-criticism is very high and allows pupils to know how well they are doing and how to improve further. Music is so popular that the accommodation is becoming too small to host all lessons and activities.
120. The outstanding array of musical opportunities is a strength of the school. Bands and orchestras are successful in local and national competitions and talented instrumentalists reach grades 7 and 8 in practical examinations. Residential weeks and foreign trips stimulate pupils' interest and build up a strong sense of community.
121. The leadership of the acting head of department is very good and there is a clear vision of where the department is going. The management is very effective as seen from the departmental review. However, the monitoring of teaching is an area for development. There has been a good improvement since the previous inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching is helping pupils to learn and achieve well.
- Insufficient time is allocated to physical education in Years 10 and 11.
- Teachers have high levels of subject expertise.
- Pupils' behaviour, attitudes and values are all very good.

- Limited use of assessment prevents all pupils from understanding how they can improve.
- Extra curricular activities give very good opportunities for pupils to extend their learning.

Commentary

122. GCSE results for 2003 were well above average with boys performing better than girls and more boys than girls entered on the course. The results represent the first year-group of pupils to take the GCSE course in Year 11. These were very able pupils and were given additional support prior to the exam.
123. Year 9 pupils attain standards that are above average. This represents good achievement as pupils enter the school with average skills. Year 9 pupils' skills overall have not yet sufficiently developed to meet the previous very high standards, but pupils are projecting to achieve the same attainment outcomes by the end of the academic year. Boys and girls attain similar standards overall.
124. Standards in Years 10 and 11 core physical education are good, but are limited by the time allocated to the subject area. In GCSE theory lessons, most pupils are working well above average, for example, in a Year 11 mixed class, pupils use technical vocabulary in relevant contexts very well. Pupils' practical skills are above average.
125. Good teaching creates a positive learning environment by establishing good relationships with pupils. Pupils respond with very good behaviour and very good attitudes to their learning. Teachers demonstrate practical skills well. For example in Year 10 hockey and Year 11 rugby pupils were able to replicate the visual demonstration of the teacher to develop and reinforce their learning. Teachers have very good subject knowledge especially in Years 10 and 11. Teachers do not offer all pupils enough opportunities to develop independent learning especially in Years 7 to 9.
126. Teachers' planning is very thorough and supports the department's detailed schemes of work. Pupils not participating in lessons are actively involved in some way and this ensures pupils do not miss learning opportunities. Talented pupils are extended wherever possible within the lesson. An extensive range of extra-curricular activities and team games enhances opportunities for most pupils' learning. Good links with local and national clubs further extend these development pathways for pupils to reinforce their skills. Assessment is not sufficiently embedded to enable all pupils to know how to improve.
127. The quality of leadership and management in the department is good. The department handbook is comprehensive, informative and detailed. Risk assessments have been written for both specific lessons and fixtures. The head of department supports his team well and regularly observes new and existing staff teaching. He has introduced Junior Sports Leaders Awards, and this will facilitate the provision of greater opportunities for pupils to gain accreditation in physical education. The department meets the statutory requirements of the National Curriculum in its areas of study. GCSE and AS and A level in the sixth form have been introduced. Previous inspection issues relating to safe storage areas and draining of sports fields have been resolved. The department has developed strategies for the use of assessment information and recording. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

Business

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership and management are very good and committed to raising achievement.
- Teachers' command of the subject is very good.

- The curriculum is very good.
- Ongoing assessment is not systematically recorded in pupils' workbooks and files.
- Opportunities for pupils to develop their information and communications technology skills are constrained.

Commentary

128. GCSE results for 2003 were above the national average. The standards seen in work are above the national average. The achievement of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is very good. In Year 11 pupils show good understanding of the break-even principle and know how to calculate this and plot the relevant graph. In Year 10 pupils can explain the different business types of sole trader and partnerships and their written work shows they can apply this to case studies.
129. The quality of teaching and learning is very good and teachers use a range of teaching methods that are well matched to pupils' different learning styles. In two very good Year 10 lessons seen, all pupils made very good progress in learning the implications of limited and unlimited financial liability, through a very effective interactive task. In Year 11 lessons seen, pupils had opportunities to work and learn independently, through time allocated to the mini enterprise scheme. For this, pupils work in small teams as 'companies' and research, cost and develop their own product. During the lessons seen, pupils collaborated as teams and learned from one another, working directly with concepts such as fixed and variable costs and applying these to their own business enterprise.
130. The range of the curriculum is very good and now includes BTec and Leisure and Tourism vocational qualifications; these cater for pupils with wider ranging levels of ability and in a lesson seen almost all were working at levels above the national average. The quality of extra-curricular activities is very good and complements normal lessons. All pupils in Year 11 participate in the *Sharegame*, for which they regularly calculate the changing value of their share portfolio and evaluate its progress on the stock market. As a result, pupils develop further their evaluative and numeracy skills.
131. Links with the local business community are very good. They support pupils' learning and are productive and well managed.
132. Leadership and management are very good. The leadership of the curriculum promotes inclusion and maximises pupils' learning. Data analysis is excellent and is used effectively to inform planning and teaching and learning. Much of the department's pre-inspection self-evaluation was borne out by the evidence established during inspection. Staff work together as a highly effective team and professional development is closely matched to the needs of the subject. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and makes a clear contribution to pupils' achievement and conceptual development.

- Very good leadership and management of the subject ensure that pupils are provided with what is nationally expected.
- The monitoring of citizenship is used well to develop the subject further.

Commentary

133. By Year 9, standards are well above what is expected. This represents good achievement. Pupils are developing well in their knowledge and understanding of responsible citizenship. By Year 11, standards are well above expectations. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of concepts such as rights and responsibilities, justice and fairness and can relate these to their own and others' experiences. Their achievement is good because they can apply their learning to new situations.
134. The school is committed to the provision of citizenship education and sees it as integral to pupils' personal development. The programme has been developed very well. Citizenship education is taught as a discrete subject and includes the personal, social and health education programme. It is not, as yet fully supported by related themes and topics covered in other subjects. Pupils have additional opportunities to develop an understanding of responsible citizenship and the democratic process through activities such as the school council.
135. Good teaching challenges pupils to develop their own attitudes towards citizenship well. In the lessons observed, the teachers' good knowledge and confidence enabled pupils to develop important citizenship skills of analysis and evaluation. The good use of questions and range of styles enable pupils to think about their own responses to issues, enabling them to develop skills, attitudes, values and independence of thought, feelings and actions. Pupils with particular needs make good progress because they are provided with work that matches their needs. Pupils speak highly of the opportunities provided for them by teachers in this subject. These activities provide a good basis to enable pupils to develop a clear awareness of what it means to be responsible citizens.
136. Very good leadership and management of the subject make a significant contribution to pupils' progress in the area. The curriculum co-ordinator has a clear vision for the subject and has been successful in creating a strong team. The teaching of citizenship is well supported by a comprehensive scheme of work and clear assessment procedures. Monitoring of the work of the subject is well established. Citizenship makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils both in terms of the curriculum on offer and teaching styles that encourage pupils to develop their own opinions about citizenship issues. Good progress is being made in the development of citizenship and this provides a firm base for further improvement.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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

Level 3 GCE AS level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	15	93	80	13	24	28.0	29.9
Biology	13	100	65	8	11	29.2	20.6
Business studies	1	100	76	0	16	40.0	26.2
Chemistry	7	100	73	14	14	34.3	24.1
Communication studies	5	100	86	0	24	32.0	32.0
Drama	2	100	87	100	20	55.0	30.6
Dance	1	100	87	100	35	50.0	34.5
Economics	6	100	74	33	20	36.7	26.4
English/English language	10	90	83	10	18	36.0	28.7
English literature	6	100	86	17	19	35.0	30.2
French	10	60	78	20	19	24.0	27.6
Design and technology	3	100	75	33	15	40.0	25.3
General studies	19	100	74	16	18	31.1	25.7
Geography	14	100	74	36	20	40.7	26.5
German	1	100	82	0	19	20.0	28.9
History	12	100	81	8	20	32.5	28.6
Information technology	1	100	67	0	11	20.0	21.4
Mathematics	13	62	62	8	17	16.9	22.1
Other sciences	12	100	71	17	16	27.5	24.3
Other social studies	26	96	70	39	17	36.9	24.1
Religious studies	4	75	80	25	23	32.5	29.8
Sport/physical education studies	8	100	73	24	11	36.3	23.1

Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	41	100	99	44	50	86.3	87.5
Biology	35	94	96	40	39	76.6	78.6
Business (VCE)	36	100	65	28	15	72.8	60.1
Chemistry	20	100	98	55	49	84	84.9
Communication studies	41	100	99	49	38	86.3	82.1
Drama	23	100	100	44	40	83.5	83.6
Economics	30	100	99	60	52	90.7	88.3
English/English language	56	100	99	43	36	84.3	80.9
English literature	18	100	100	72	47	96.7	86.5
French	11	100	99	64	52	98.2	87.6
Design and technology	6	100	98	50	35	83.3	77.9
General studies	97	100	95	29	41	73.4	73.1
Geography	40	100	99	65	45	98.0	84.0
German	6	100	98	50	48	86.7	84.8
History	14	100	99	64	45	92.9	84.6
Information technology (VQ)	9	94	78	28	15	70.0	64.9
Leisure and tourism	6	100	63	33	10	80.0	57.9
Mathematics	27	100	97	67	56	98.5	88.8
Music	2	100	99	50	39	90.0	81.1
Other sciences	50	96	97	44	42	77.2	80.3
Other social studies	11	100	97	36	43	83.6	81.8
Physics	21	91	97	33	45	71.4	81.7

Religious studies	12	100	99	67	47	96.7	85.6
Sports/physical education studies	17	100	98	29	31	75.3	75.2

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning lead to examination results that are well above average at A level.
- Students' very positive attitudes make a strong contribution to their very good achievement.
- Not enough importance is given to consolidating learning at the end of the lesson.
- Leadership of the subject is very good and teachers work together very effectively as a team.

Commentary

137. Results at A level in 2004 were of a high standard in language, and literature. They matched the well above average standards of the previous year's results. Female students achieved better than males. The number of students taking the recently introduced combined language and literature course was too small to be statistically significant. However, numbers are now considerably larger in both years. The AS level results were higher than those at A level.
138. Standards of work seen in lessons and written assignments are well above average. Overall achievement is very good. Students show an impressive maturity in their attitudes to work. They are well prepared for lessons and keen to take an active part in the different activities. Classroom relationships are excellent. There is no difference in achievement between male and female students. Most students comment very perceptively in speech and in writing on the use of language and the development of themes and characters in the texts they study. Students write at length. They research information very efficiently from books and the internet and use it selectively. Higher attaining students contribute to discussions in a very articulate and confident manner, and their reading of poetry is fluent and full of expression. Students with special educational needs achieve successfully when learning activities give them plenty of opportunities for listening and speaking.
139. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Students make very good progress in increasing their knowledge and understanding of literary themes, textual analysis and the issues relating to language development because their teachers have a very good command of the subject and an enthusiasm for it. There is a substantial amount of outstanding teaching that offers a high level of challenge and expectation. It inspires students to work at a fast pace, both collaboratively and individually, and produce work that is impressive in depth of thought and clarity of expression. A particular strength of the teaching is the close attention paid to the accurate use of technical terms, with the result that students are confident in their analyses of effective language. Students become adept at commenting critically on their work when teachers ensure that assessment is an integral part of the lesson. However, where the ending of the lesson is rushed because of time slippages, the opportunities for students to reflect on what they have learnt are too limited.
140. The subject is very well led and managed with clear vision and a constant focus on ways of enabling students to succeed. There is an extremely strong teaching team in which staff with a wide range of experience work together very effectively to offer a curriculum of high quality. Students benefit from good quality resources, and a comprehensive programme of extra-curricular activities makes a very good contribution to their spiritual, social and cultural development. The department has a critical approach to its performance and knows how to use self-evaluation to move forward. It is aware, for instance, of the need to sustain standards in Year 13. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in extending the range of examination courses so that students can choose an area of study that appeals to them, such as the combined course in language and literature, in which they achieve well.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

141. The school makes very good provision for promoting language and literacy across the curriculum and standards are well above average. Most subjects make a very positive contribution to the development of speaking and writing skills through constant reinforcement of correct subject vocabulary. This leads to very accurate understanding and usage in subjects such as business studies, English and physical education. There are productive debates in theatre studies, and students benefit from the good opportunities to take part in drama productions. Students' ability to initiate questioning is a particular strength in mathematics, and speaking skills are very well developed in design and technology. There are good opportunities for independent research and extended writing in English, modern foreign languages and science. In history students' understanding of the discourse structure gives them access to the highest grades.

Modern foreign languages

The focus of the inspection was on French. Work in German and Spanish (A level), Latin (GCSE), Italian, Russian and Spanish (non-examination courses) was sampled. In each case, students achieved very well in response to very good, lively teaching, taking advantage of unusually good opportunities to extend their experience of languages.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Results at A level in 2003 were above average, and well above average for female students.
- Students achieve very well because very good teaching provides effective guidance while encouraging them to be creative in their use of language.
- Progress is well supported by the range of authentic resources and individual work with foreign language assistants.
- About half the number of students who begin the AS course do not continue their study into Year 13.

Commentary

142. Both male and female students achieved very good A level results in 2003, with three quarters of candidates gaining A or B grades. In 2004, there was a decline in the proportion of higher grades, but 13 out of 16 candidates gained grades A to C, with good performance by female students and the small number of male students. Results at AS level were disappointing overall, despite three A grades.
143. Standards seen in Year 13 vary considerably, but are above average overall, with all students achieving very well. Higher attaining students are very fluent in oral work. They speak confidently, with exceptional accuracy and pronunciation. Other students contribute willingly and make good improvement in their speed of response and content. All students apply themselves diligently, and prepare well for lessons, for example by using the internet to gather information. Consequently, most can understand the detail and overall meaning in extended written articles. Average attainers have more difficulty in listening comprehension. Written work shows good application of more complex language learned during the course. The best work contains sophisticated language, with students able to balance arguments and draw conclusions. In Year 12, students in the early stage of their AS course are learning and consolidating tenses, and how to apply the subjunctive. Work with a foreign language assistant helps students to improve their oral confidence. Achievement is very good overall, with clear progression from GCSE.

144. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge. In some lessons they do not use this to have maximum impact on learning, although the expectation for students to use French is clear from the start of the course. Regular sessions with foreign language assistants ensure progress in speaking. Lessons are well planned to cover prescribed topics and provide challenging tasks for all students. Excellent relationships support learning well, because students value the praise and encouragement they receive for good effort. Students' own very positive attitudes contribute significantly to their progress, and they are diligent in researching topics for themselves. Independence in learning is actively encouraged, within a clear framework of guidance. Teachers provide very good feedback on all aspects of students' work. Lessons are enlivened by the use of very good authentic resources, which heighten students' awareness of French-speaking countries as well as their subject knowledge. These include videos of French films, newspapers and magazines, to which students subscribe.
145. Leadership and management are good. There have been problems in timetabling which affected continuity in learning for some students during last year's AS course. These have been resolved, and deployment of staff is now more effective. Students benefit from regular progress reviews. They know their targets and how they are getting on. The work of the three foreign language assistants is well directed. There is a high drop-out rate at the end of Year 12, for various reasons. There is a commitment to providing access to the AS course, irrespective of long-term intentions. Some students found the course content demanding and were unhappy at their progress, whereas others enjoyed the course but did not intend to proceed further. Although good use is made of regional enrichment opportunities, there are currently no links or exchanges with France to further improve learning and broaden experience.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent command of the subject leads to clear explanations of the concepts.
- Students' capacity to work independently and collaboratively is impressive.
- A level students achieve very high standards and perform well above the national average compared to national figures.
- Students have high aspirations and a determination to achieve highly.

Commentary

146. In 2003, A level mathematics results were well above the national average and AS level results were broadly in line with the national average. In 2004 A level results were also very good and in further mathematics ten out of eleven students achieved grade A or B, nine gaining the top grade.
147. More male than female students choose to study A level mathematics and both males and females achieve very well. Students entering A level courses have mathematics GCSE grades A* to B. Most students who continue to full A level in mathematics and further mathematics achieve A or B grades. Less than half the students finish their mathematics study after one year, many with good grades. Achievement of those students in mathematics post-16 is very good.
148. Teachers have excellent mathematics knowledge and teaching is very good. Learning is also very good. Lessons are very well prepared and teachers give very clear explanations and ensure students take part in discussions. Students respond well to discussions and collaborate well in a practical mechanics lesson, making links with physics and extending their understanding of co-planar forces. The most able generally lead discussions and make excellent contributions. Teachers ask challenging questions which stimulate further and

deeper thought leading to understanding for instance in using the graphs of the spring extensions to find the constant. Students are very highly motivated.

149. Leadership is very good and management of the department is good. The head of department is a good role model who is dedicated to students achieving their potential. Students have very good support both in class and additionally when they need it staff make themselves available. Assessment and target setting are used well to ensure students' progress.

Mathematics across the curriculum

150. Students' mathematical skills are good and contribute well to their progress in other subjects. Students have a strong feel for number which is seen in many aspects particularly in economics, design and technology and all aspects of geography. In chemistry volumetric calculations are well done.

SCIENCE

Biology

The overall provision for biology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and students achieve well.
- In the best lessons students learn very well because teachers use interesting teaching methods.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour contribute to good learning and good achievement.
- Good leadership is helping to improve provision and raise standards.
- In a minority of lessons the level of challenge does not meet the needs of all students.

Commentary

151. The 2003 GCE A level examination results were above average. The proportion of students gaining higher grade passes was just above average and 33 out of 35 candidates gained a pass. A higher proportion of female students gained A and B grades than male students. Over the last three years results have improved. The (unvalidated) 2004 results indicate that the proportion of students gaining higher grades exceeded that of the previous year. In the 2003 AS level exam results were well above average and all students gained a pass.
152. Students achieve well by the end of Year 13 and standards are above the national average. In the best lessons they are active learners, use prior learning well, and make good gains in their understanding of chromosomes and enzyme activity. Achievement in Year 12 is sound and students show satisfactory gains in investigation techniques.
153. Teaching and learning are good overall, but vary from satisfactory to very good. In the best lessons teachers use a variety of interesting activities and resources. This helps to engage and challenge all students and consequently learning is very good. In some Year 12 lessons, however, the level of challenge is insufficient for all students and the quality of learning is only satisfactory.
154. The subject is well led by an enthusiastic teacher who provides good support for other teachers, including those newly qualified. She encourages a productive degree of shared planning which is helping to make learning more interesting. Management is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are monitored competently and assessment data is very well used to monitor performance. Insufficient emphasis is given to monitoring the quality of provision through sampling the work of students. A field study visit helps to enrich the curriculum. Since the last inspection sound improvements have been achieved.

Chemistry

The overall provision is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are above average and have improved significantly over the last three years.
- The very good attitudes of students and good teaching lead to good achievement.
- Lesson planning and the use of homework are strengths which help students to learn well.
- Good leadership is helping to raise standards.
- Assessment is very well used to set targets and monitor students' progress.
- There are insufficient opportunities at the end of some lessons to review learning and too few planned visits to enhance the curriculum.

Commentary

155. The GCE A level 2 examination results in 2003 were in line with the national average. The proportion of higher grade passes, A and B was slightly above average and all students gained a pass. There were no significant differences between the performances of male and female students. The 2004 (unconfirmed) results show further improvement on the previous year, with eighty per cent of students attaining higher grade passes and all students gaining a pass. In the 2003 AS level exam results were well above average and all students gained a pass.
156. Student achievement overall is good. This results from good teaching and very good attitudes to learning by the students. Standards observed in Year 13 are above average. Most students have a good grasp of the conventions for naming and drawing complex hydrocarbon molecules and the mechanisms of addition reactions. In Year 12 achievement is good. Students develop their techniques of volumetric analysis well and have a good grasp of chemical bonding and structure.
157. The quality of teaching is good. In some lessons it is very good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge, which they use well in explanations but sometimes less well in reviewing students' understanding at the end of lessons. Students learn well because lessons are well planned and homework is used very effectively to reinforce learning. There is good provision for more able pupils. Homework and formally assessed work are regularly and thoroughly marked. The detailed feedback on assignments is greatly valued by students.
158. Leadership of the subject is good and management is satisfactory. Effective steps have been taken through the monitoring of teaching to improve standards and good support is provided for newly qualified teachers. Teaching and learning are monitored competently and assessment data is very well used to monitor performance. Insufficient emphasis is given to monitoring the quality of provision through sampling the work of students. Further enhancement of the curriculum, through visits and expert visitors would help to raise the status and popularity of the subject. Since the last inspection improvement has been good.

Psychology

159. In the one Year 13 lesson sampled teaching and learning were both good. Students achieved well and standards of work seen were in line with expectation. Students understood the significance of key deprivation studies.

HUMANITIES

Geography

The overall provision in geography is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent leadership promotes a continued focus on improving students' opportunities for success.
- Standards have improved and are amongst the best in the school.
- Teachers' expertise and very high expectations enable students to achieve very well.
- Excellent attitudes and relationships contribute to very good learning.
- The lack of access to information and communication technology is a barrier to learning in some lessons.

Commentary

160. In the A level examination in 2003, results for a large group of students were well above the national average. Overall, students performed better in geography than in their other subjects. Results improved in 2004 and were amongst the best in the school. There was an increase in the proportion of A and B grades awarded and very high achievement in relation to prior attainment.
161. Standards of work seen during the inspection were well above average. Excellent relationships between teachers and students, and the mature attitude of students, enable ideas and questions to be discussed in detail. All contributions are valued. Teachers are excellent role models and have very high expectations of their students. As a result, the pace of learning is very rapid. Teachers' detailed knowledge of individual needs helps all students to improve the quality of their work and discussion with students shows that they enjoy their learning. Their confidence grows as they acquire and understand the technical vocabulary needed at advanced level. By Year 13, most students achieve very well and are working beyond the level predicted for them at the beginning of the course.
162. Teaching and learning are very good overall. One outstanding lesson was seen in Year 12 where complex aspects of migration were explained through the skilful use of stimulating, topical resources. The extremely high quality of detailed marking seen in this lesson, focused on precise examination requirements, is a common feature of sixth form teaching in this subject and helps students to see exactly how to improve. Preparation for residential fieldwork is rigorous in the demands that it makes on students' contributions but also emphasises the fun and rewards that result from learning outside the classroom. The lack of computers within teaching rooms restricts progress in lessons that rely on current and rapidly changing data.
163. The department's process of self-evaluation concludes that leadership and management are very good. The vision shown by the head of department in steering the school's plans for curriculum development is evidence of excellent leadership. Very good management of a cohesive team of experienced teachers and newer colleagues creates a climate of shared expertise, generous support and constant striving for improvement. Geography is a popular choice of subject, held in high regard by students who appreciate the benefits of a wide variety of teaching styles. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

History

Provision in history is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very good, with a very high proportion of students achieving top A/B grades.
- Exceptionally well-qualified teachers provide excellent guidance that encourages students to reach their full potential.
- Mutual respect between teachers and students results in levels of rigorous discourse more commonly found in university.
- Innovative use of technology means that students read widely and have access to recently published material.
- Students recognise and hold in the highest regard the dedication of their teachers.

Commentary

164. Standards are very high. Results in 2003 were well above the national average. All students obtained pass grades and the proportion earning the higher A/B grades was 20 per cent above the national average. Boys performed as well as girls. Results in 2004 were even higher, with 83.3 per cent awarded A/B grades. Students are very well tutored in the writing conventions used by academics so that they convey their sophisticated understanding very effectively. Achievement is very good.
165. Teaching and learning overall are excellent. Teachers have profound subject knowledge and detailed understanding of the examination procedures. As a result, lessons, homework and tutorials are all dedicated to reinforcing the highest standards. The excellent rapport and mutual respect that exists between teachers and students creates an environment in which the highest levels of learning flourish. Students were anxious to share with inspectors their appreciation of the quality of teaching and the ready availability of help and support.
166. The department makes very good use of the school intranet to post academic articles and course related information. This can be used from home by students via a password protected website so that they have good out-of-hours access. The availability of high quality articles further encourages the independent learning that is a feature of the work of the department. Library provision is good.
167. Some of the finest teaching takes place in the one-to-one tutorials in which draft work is closely analysed in a way that students come to understand very clearly what needs to be improved. This guidance extends beyond the strictly historical content and supports those students who have not yet fully grasped the finer elements of academic writing.
168. Leadership and management are excellent. The strongest features are the absolute commitment of the whole department to very high standards, the degree to which the teachers develop and share their areas of specialist expertise and the particularly effective use of contacts within the academic world of universities and historians. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good.

Geology

169. One geology lesson was observed in which the teacher's expert knowledge helped students to acquire essential skills very rapidly.

Sociology

170. One sociology lesson was observed in which Year 12 students achieved very well as they applied their theoretical knowledge to examples of contrasting family structures.

ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good.
- Current standards are well above average.
- Project work in graphics shows very good development of students own ideas.
- Students have positive and mature attitudes with very good independent learning skills.
- Projects using combinations of wood, metal and plastics in product design are excellent.

Commentary

171. 2003 A level results were well above average. Results in 2004 show a similar well above average profile. Food technology, graphics and product design were seen during the inspection. Standards seen are well above average in all areas and represent very good achievement as a result of very good planning and very good teaching. Achievement is very good as subject knowledge and course content are carefully presented by highly experienced teaching staff. Well focussed lessons enable students to understand the assessment criteria and the requirements of the examination specification very well. Students are very articulate and designing is strongly individual in graphics. All enjoy the choices and freedoms that these well planned courses offer. The students know their weaknesses and their strengths through very good assessments of their work and targeted guidance on how to improve by experienced and enthusiastic teaching and non-teaching staff.
172. Teaching and learning are very good overall. Students are mature and very positive. They work hard and enjoy the mature way that teaching staff treat them. Carefully prepared resources, and well communicated subject knowledge result in very effective learning. Students are given many opportunities for very personal responses to problems in all subjects and students enjoy these freedoms. The work in folders reflects this. In product design students design and make using a wide range of materials and often innovative combinations of materials and structural forms. The students have very good independent learning skills, with most students using their private study period to return to the department and continue studying. They enjoy the working atmosphere and continue to show highly developed personal ideas so essential at this level. Excellent individual tutorials are used to help develop new directions and challenges which the students enjoy and find essential to help track their own progress.
173. The department and subject are very well led and managed. Students benefit from the wide range of expertise, opinion and interest of the teachers. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good, particularly in relation to improved standards and achievement.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

Art and design

Provision in art is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very strong teaching that incorporates a high level of challenge leads to very good A level results.
- Leadership provides a very good role model and this is driving up standards.
- Students achieve very well.

Commentary

174. Results in GCE A level in 2003 were above average. In 2004 results improved significantly. Achievement for these students was very good because they maintained well their previous high attainment at GCSE and AS level GCE. Female students did better than males. Standards in the current Year 13 are well above average. Last year nearly half of this group gained the higher grades A or B at AS level. Standards in the current Year 12 are above average and indications are that they are set to rise. This is because students are guided through a sequential working method that reviews and refines work as it progresses.
175. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers set high expectations and the students make very good progress. Teachers' extensive subject knowledge is well used and is always focused on individual students' needs. A mixture of traditional and radical teaching methods leads to students' different learning styles being met. Students learn an open-mindedness that allows them to cope with difficult new concepts. This approach broadens their experience and leads them to improve their ability to generate ideas. Students were seen to express these ideas effectively and meet examination assessment objectives very well. Students use modern technology confidently. Assessment is very good. The very effective system includes evaluation sheets that are used to record targets agreed between teachers and students. These targets are reviewed regularly and fresh, demanding targets are set to make sure that all students match or exceed their teachers' very high expectations. Students' attitudes are very good. They rise to the challenge and meet the strenuous demands made of them.
176. Leadership and management are very good. The subject leader has built a team that works together very well. Sixth form teaching is shared equitably and managed very well. The liaison that takes place ensures that, firstly, there is complete coverage of the scheme of work and, secondly, that all teachers understand the relevance of their contribution. The demands of keeping up-to-date with developments in the current world of art lead to very productive professional development. The many students who successfully apply to study art in higher education are very well supported by the department's leadership and management. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good. The numbers recruited onto courses have increased dramatically. Results are now very good and overall achievement is very good.

Theatre studies

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are very good as a result of very good teaching.
- Achievement is very good as students are very responsive and can successfully apply their learning.
- The relationships between teachers and students are excellent.
- Opportunities to participate in drama productions and visit theatres are excellent.
- Accommodation is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

177. Theatre studies A level results in 2003 were in line with the national average. The department worked successfully to target and improve the new syllabus requirements for written work and improved results in 2004. Standards seen in lessons were very good as a result of very good teaching and the very positive attitudes of students. Achievement is also very good as students are able to successfully apply what they have learnt to new and challenging tasks.
178. Teaching is very good. Teachers are highly knowledgeable and very enthusiastic. Lessons are well planned and learning is considerably enhanced by teachers' expert questioning and clear explanations which enable students to develop and refine their ideas. Teachers' skilled analysis of dramatic texts enables them to make incisive interventions to build students'

learning. Assessment of students' work is positive and accurate. Excellent relationships enable a dynamic working atmosphere in lessons.

179. Learning is very good. Students' attitudes to work are exemplary. They are attentive, focused, engrossed in their work and very responsive. They engage in productive debate with one another and the teacher because they want to clarify their ideas and deepen their understanding. They are very supportive of each other and their evaluation of one another's work is thoughtful and sensitive. When presented with a really challenging task, they work quickly and co-operatively to produce a strong and moving drama.
180. The leadership and management of the department are very good. The head of department has a strong vision for the future and is building a very effective team. Teachers have successfully increased the number of boys taking theatre studies. Departmental resources are only just satisfactory. Only one drama space meets the requirements of the A level course. The quality of drama provision is greatly enhanced by popular school productions, theatre trips, partnerships with touring companies and theatres, and study tours abroad.
181. Accommodation, which was unsatisfactory in the last inspection, is still unsatisfactory. However, plans for future accommodation are in place. Since the last inspection a head of drama has been appointed and has maintained the high standards described in that report.

Media studies

Provision for media studies is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards at A level have improved year on year.
- Teaching is very good because teachers are knowledgeable and stimulating.
- Assessment of students' work is detailed and helpful.
- Relationships between teachers and students are excellent.
- Resources for production work are limited.

Commentary

182. A level results in media studies have improved year on year. In 2003, they were above the national average. Standards seen in lessons were very good as a result of very good teaching and students' very positive attitudes to learning. Achievement is very good as students are able to apply their acquired analytical skills accurately to new media texts.
183. Teaching is very good. Teachers are knowledgeable, stimulating and enthusiastic. The carefully devised pace of lessons challenges students to complete a variety of focused activities in tight time frames. This approach and very well targeted resources successfully reinforce and build students' understanding of media texts and concepts. Teachers' precise questioning helps students explore, develop and consolidate their ideas. Assessment of students' work is detailed and helpful with pointers for improvement. Excellent teacher/student relationships provide a very positive climate for learning.
184. Learning is very good. Students clearly enjoy media studies, are attentive, focused and engrossed in their work. They respond positively and readily to teachers' questions. They engage in lively and intelligent discussion which enables them to extend their understanding of media texts. Students' independent and co-operative work is equally effective in enabling them to prepare intelligent responses and presentations. Most students write very well indeed and successfully use the internet for research. Some make excellent use of information and communication technology to produce their practical coursework.
185. The teacher in charge of media studies has a clear vision of what she wants to achieve and high expectations of her students. Her leadership of the subject is very good as she has

excellent subject knowledge which enables her to offer other media staff considerable support. The joint management of media studies by the teacher in charge and the head of English is good but, because media studies resides within the English department, it is reliant on the already stretched English budget. Technical resources for media studies are only satisfactory. However, this is not adversely affecting standards. The school did not offer media studies at the time of the last inspection

HOSPITALITY, SPORTS, LEISURE AND TRAVEL

Physical education

The provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Opportunities for students' personal development are excellent.
- There is no timetabled provision for recreational physical education.
- There is no dedicated teaching base for examination teaching.

Commentary

186. The 2003 A level results were in line with the national average at the higher grades. Standards seen in Year 13 lessons were above the national average and students' achievement is good.
187. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and lesson materials are of a high quality. Teachers encourage students to make a comparative analysis with developments in physical education in Europe. Students work independently and make deductions from facts and evidence to evaluate the development of traditional British sport in other parts of the world.
188. There are excellent opportunities for students to take responsibility and develop their leadership skills. They help to run and coach junior teams and clubs and play a significant role in leading and refereeing the inter-house competitions. Senior students also take a leading role in organising annual sports days for the local primary schools and have the opportunity to participate in the Community Sports Leadership Award. There are very high levels of participation in the senior school teams and many students pursue sport to higher levels with local and national clubs and academies. There is currently no timetabled provision for students to participate in recreational physical education or fitness activities and so the needs of all students are not met in this respect.
189. Leadership and management are good. There is a clear focus on achievement and the most productive lines of development are in place to manage recent changes in staff responsibilities for examination teaching. Staff are good role models and the leadership of the curriculum is knowledgeable. Performance data is used to inform planning and assessment and self-evaluation is embedded and clearly directed towards improvement. New staff are well supported. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

BUSINESS

Provision for business is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are very confident in discussing concepts and applying them to new situations.
- Teachers have an excellent command of the subject, which leads to students' high levels of achievement.
- Assessment procedures are well-developed, with students' progress captured through tracking sheets.
- The department provides a range of courses which cater for a wide variety of needs.
- Strong links with local business enhance the curriculum.
- Very good relationships encourage an atmosphere of open enquiry.
- Limited computer access restricts students in applying and developing their information and communication technology skills in this area.

Commentary

190. Standards in business studies are well above average. In 2003 the percentage of students gaining an A or B in business studies was twice the national figure, and provisional assessment information for 2004 indicates that further improvement has taken place. Students are very articulate when discussing their work, and are able to apply concepts to new situations because teachers insist on precision when using technical terminology. For instance, in an economics lesson, students were able to apply the concept of perfect competition to international trade.
191. Achievement is very good. In lessons students focus on different concepts for the whole lesson, because teachers employ several teaching methods, and use resources well. Students are motivated, and make very good progress in lessons.
192. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers' expertise and the match of staff to the curriculum are excellent. For example, two members of staff are ex-accountants. Students are set targets and given feedback on specially designed 'tracker' sheets, which help them to achieve as good a level as they can, and to ensure consistency in assessment across the department. Teachers place great emphasis on exam technique, and in a sample economics lesson this was completely integrated into the lesson rather than as an add-on. This leads to students naturally using the correct approach when answering questions.
193. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department is clearly committed to achieving the highest standards for all, and this permeates through the department and helps explain the high level of dedication seen. The department has led the way in establishing vocational courses over several years, thereby providing all students with an opportunity to gain expertise in business education. In line with whole school policy, the department has adopted a formal performance management system involving lesson monitoring, and this supplements the informal methods used. These approaches help to foster good relationships and consistency across the department.
194. Relationships in classrooms, and between staff, are very good, and so students are willing to ask questions and contribute to discussions. Involvement with local business is very strong and this reinforces the work undertaken in lessons.
195. The whole school building programme has ensured that the department has exclusive access to the computers in its area. However, access is still limited; for example, one student brings in a personal laptop in order to ensure access. This means opportunities for using information and communication technology in a business context are lost, thereby possibly limiting the degree of progress which might be made.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

The leadership of other key staff	1	2
The effectiveness of management	1	2

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