

# INSPECTION REPORT

## HEATHSIDE SCHOOL

Weybridge

LEA area: Surrey

Unique reference number: 125309

Headteacher: Dr Glyn Willoughby

Lead inspector: Mrs Helen Hutchings

Dates of inspection: 17<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> January 2005

Inspection number: 268820

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

© Crown copyright 2005

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

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive  
School category: Foundation  
Age range of pupils: 11-18  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 1355

School address: Brooklands Lane  
Weybridge  
Surrey  
Postcode: KT13 8UZ

Telephone number: 01932 846162  
Fax number: 01932 828142

Appropriate authority: The governing body  
Name of chair of governors: Mr Bill Vestey

Date of previous inspection: 21<sup>st</sup> January 1999

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Heathside School is a larger than average comprehensive school in Weybridge, Surrey, with 1335 students on roll. The sixth form is growing and now has 192 students. Provision for students aged from 14 to 18 is enhanced through a few courses run jointly with the adjacent further education college, Brooklands College. The school is popular and oversubscribed. Students join the school from over 30 primary schools, but predominantly come from the locality. The overall socio-economic background of the students is above average and their standard of attainment on entry to the school is above average, as measured by the tests taken at the end of Year 6. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is well below the national average. A small proportion of students come from ethnic minority backgrounds. No students are at an early stage of learning English and very few do not speak English as their mother tongue. The great majority of students are white. The proportion of students identified as having special educational needs, including those who have statements of special educational need, is below the national average. Students' needs are social, emotional and behavioural, moderate learning difficulties with dyslexia, speech and communication, autism and hearing impairment or physical impairment.

The school gained Specialist Technology College status in 1996 and has also received a number of awards, including the Specialist College 70% 5A-C Award, the Annual Toshiba Schools' Sports Award and a Sportsmark in 2004.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team |                    |                | Subject responsibilities   |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|----------------|--|
| 7541                           | Helen Hutchings    | Lead inspector | Critical thinking (sixth form)                                   |
| 9053                           | Vivienne Phillips  | Lay inspector  |  |
| 24142                          | Sylvia Argyle      |                | English; English literature (sixth form)                         |
| 1503                           | Terry Brown        |                | Mathematics; mathematics (sixth form)                            |
| 3242                           | Michael Newman     |                | Science; Biology (sixth form)                                    |
| 32590                          | Roger Fenwick      |                | Information and communication technology (ICT); ICT (sixth form) |
| 2501                           | Raye Allison-Smith |                | Art and design   |
| 33419                          | Robert McDonough   |                | Design and technology  |
| 35165                          | Sheila Kaye        |                | Special educational needs  |
| 25073                          | Stuart Jordan      |                | History; Business education (sixth form)                         |
| 22042                          | John Challands     |                | Geography; geography (sixth form)                                |
| 22953                          | Peter Dacombe      |                | Modern foreign languages: French (sixth form)                    |
| 34084                          | Mary Davis         | Team inspector | Music  |
| 27226                          | Richard Cribb      | Team inspector | Physical education; Religious education                          |
| 32208                          | Derek Aitken       |                | Citizenship  |

The inspection contractor was:

**e-Qualitas Limited**

Langshaw  
 Pastens Road  
 Limpsfield Chart  
 Oxted  
 Surrey  
 RH8 0RE

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet *'Complaining about*

*Ofsted Inspections'*, which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

## **REPORT CONTENTS**

|   | Page      |
|---|-----------|
| <b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>                          | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>     |           |
| <b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>                           | <b>10</b> |
| Standards achieved in, subjects and courses                   |           |
| Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities        |           |
| <b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>            | <b>15</b> |
| Teaching and learning   |           |
| The curriculum  |           |
| Care, guidance and support                                    |           |
| Partnership with parents, other schools and the community     |           |
| <b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>                              | <b>22</b> |
| <b>OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES</b>                               | <b>24</b> |
| <b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b> | <b>26</b> |
| <b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4</b>             |           |
| <b>SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM</b>                 |           |
| <b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>      | <b>55</b> |

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The school provides a good quality of education for its students** with some very good features and gives good value for money. Standards are well above national averages, students achieve well, teaching and learning are good, relationships are positive and the quality of care, support and guidance is very good. The principal leads the school very well and the governing body gives strong support for the school's work and development. The school fulfils the aims of its Technology College status well.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are

- Students have very good attitudes to their learning and this helps them to learn and achieve well
- Results in tests and examinations are well above national averages in the main school and above average in the sixth form
- Good professional development of all staff is resulting in good teaching overall
- Provision is good or very good in most subjects and is satisfactory in mathematics
- Opportunities for students to enrich their experiences beyond lessons are very good
- Students receive very good, high quality care and support
- Opportunities for vocational experiences and work-related learning are limited throughout the school
- Accommodation and facilities, including access to computers, for independent learning is inadequate and cramped to meet the learning needs of many subjects

**The school has improved well since it was last inspected in January 1999.** Overall, standards have gone up and teaching and learning are better than at that time. The sixth form has grown. The school has addressed the issues identified in the last report and the quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum are monitored closely. Students' spiritual development is now good and they have a good awareness and understanding of living in a multi-ethnic society. Other statutory curriculum requirements have been met, but there is not a daily act of collective worship for all students and provision for religious education in the sixth form does not meet requirements.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

| Performance compared with: |                                 | all schools |      |                   | similar schools |
|----------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|------|-------------------|-----------------|
|                            |                                 | 2002        | 2003 | 2004 <sup>1</sup> | 2004            |
| Year 11                    | GCSE/GNVQ examinations          | A           | A    | A                 | B               |
| Year 13                    | A/AS level and VCE examinations | B           | B    | B                 |                 |

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

**Overall, achievement is good** and students achieve very well in Years 10 and 11 because teaching is focused very well on examination requirements. Students enter the school with standards above national averages and improve on this so that standards are well above the levels expected in the main school and above average in the sixth form. Students achieve very well in English, well in science and satisfactorily in mathematics. Achievement in other subjects is generally good or very good. All groups of students make similar levels of progress.

**Students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good.** Students have very good attitudes to learning and behave

<sup>1</sup> Based on the school's data benchmarked against national data as results have not yet been validated fully nationally.

well. The personal ambition and desire to do well that they bring from home to school is a significant factor in leading to their achievements. Attendance and punctuality are good.



## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

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

**Teaching and learning are good.** Teachers use their considerable subject knowledge to plan work which meets students' aspirations to succeed and achieve well in examinations. The quality of day-to-day assessment is very good. It helps students to understand how to improve their work further. Students are very well known to staff and the very good, high quality care, support and guidance is based on rigorous assessment of their personal needs and academic performance. Students' good nature overcomes the lack of space and some deficiencies in accommodation. The curriculum is satisfactory. Opportunities to study more than one language in Years 7 to 9 are good, but vocational programmes are too limited in Years 10 to 13. A wide range of extra-curricular and other activities enrich students' overall educational, social and cultural experiences. Students who have special educational needs have good access to the full curriculum.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**The leadership, management and governance of the school are good.** The principal is a very good leader and works closely with the vice-principal to foster a very strong sense of corporate responsibility and teamwork amongst the staff. In turn, they are extremely loyal and very committed to the students and the school's goals. Other key staff provide effective leadership and management of their areas of responsibility. The use of performance data and teachers' on-going assessments to monitor and track students' progress are particular strengths and provide the school with a clear picture for future development. Very good systems are in place for the review and professional development of staff.

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

The school is popular and oversubscribed because of its deservedly good reputation. Parents are supportive of the school and think it does a good job, although with some scope to improve communication, as inspectors and the school agree, particularly in keeping parents up to date on how well their children are doing. Some parents' concerns about misbehaviour and bullying are less well founded as both are dealt with well. Students think this is a good school with high expectations and good teaching. They worry about occasional bullying and disruptive behaviour although discussions made it clear that some incidents spill over from outside school, which is orderly. Students do not all feel that some staff listen well or give them a fair chance to put across their point of view, although the inspection found that the school takes active steps to consult them and act on their suggestions.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The most important things the school should do to improve are

- Develop provision in mathematics to the very good level of other core subjects
- Increase opportunities for vocational education and provision for work-related learning
- Improve the learning environment, accommodation and facilities for independent learning across the school and study facilities for the sixth form

and, to meet statutory requirements

- Provide a daily act of collective worship for all students
- Make adequate provision for religious education in the sixth form

## THE SIXTH FORM

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The overall effectiveness of the sixth form is good. Its cost-effectiveness is good. A wide range of academic courses and one vocational course are offered. Students are well taught and this, combined with their very good attitudes to learning, enables them to achieve well. Although many start their advanced studies with average or only slightly above average qualifications, students' examination results are better than those reached nationally. The sixth form is well led and managed through very good team work. It has more than doubled in size since the last inspection, attracting about half of the students from Year 11 in the main school and some each year from other schools. Improvement has been good.

The main strengths and weaknesses are

- Examination results are above national averages
- Good teaching and strongly motivated students ensure good achievement
- Personal development is promoted well through extra-curricular and community activities
- Inadequate accommodation limits independent study

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

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

| Curriculum area                          | Evaluation  |
|--|---|
| English, languages and communication     | <b>English: good.</b> Standards attained are above the national average. Students achieve well in relation to their attainment at the start of the course because they are well taught. Although many students find the full two-year course demanding, teachers' assessment of coursework is very effective in helping students to progress. |
|  | <b>French: satisfactory.</b> Standards in AS meet the national average although in A2, they are slightly lower. Students' achievement is satisfactory given their attainment at the start of the course. The quality of teaching is good and after some difficulties staffing is now stable.  |
| Mathematics                              | <b>Mathematics: satisfactory.</b> Students are keen. A-level results are above the national average because teaching is good. However, in 2004, students did not all continue after AS in Year 12 to the full A-level in Year 13.   |
| Science                                  | <b>Biology: very good.</b> Results are well above the national average. Achievement remains good in spite of some fluctuation in attainment at the start of the course. Teaching and learning are improved by teamwork and by very effective assessment.  |
| Information and communication technology | <b>Information and communication technology: very good.</b> Standards are well above the national average. Imaginative and skilful teaching helps students achieve very well. The course prepares students for success in advanced examinations though they have limited experience of actual commercial systems.                             |
| Humanities                               | <b>Geography: good.</b> Standards attained are above the national average. Teachers have good subject knowledge. Their good use of resources and wide range of activities is reflected in students' good achievement.   |
| Business                                 | <b>Business education: very good.</b> Results are well above the national average. Students exceed expectations because of the very good teaching.  |

| Curriculum area   | Evaluation   |
|-------------------|--|
| General education | <b>Critical thinking: good.</b> Results are well above the national average. Teaching uses prepared support materials from the examination board effectively and students work hard to achieve very well in this new course. |

*The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and course 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**

**Provision for students' advice, guidance and support is very good.** Students are well informed about what is available in the sixth form. They are supported well by subject teachers and form tutors and encouraged to have high expectations of themselves and set ambitious personal targets. Extra support is provided when this is deemed necessary. Good opportunities exist for students to express their views to senior management through the head boy, head girl and their deputies and also through the school council. Students receive very good information about later stages of education.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM**

**The leadership and management of the sixth form are good.** The sixth form is well led by an enthusiastic team and organisational routines run smoothly. The positive relationships that exist between teachers and students contribute strongly to the success of the sixth form. The majority of students are highly motivated to do well and many choose, in agreement with the school, to work and study at home during day-time sessions. In part, this overcomes the inadequate accommodation and the lack of a specific sixth form study area.

### **STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM**

Students are positive about the school and enjoy being in the sixth form. They are supportive of the opportunities the school offers. They consider they are treated fairly and that their views are taken into account. They respect their teachers and appreciate the time and effort teachers make beyond the lessons on their behalf. They know how well they are doing because their work is thoroughly assessed with suggestions on how to improve. They think the school is well run.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

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

Students' achievement is good and all groups of students make similar levels of progress. Standards, overall, are well above average in the main school and above average in the sixth form. Examination results have been effectively maintained since the last inspection and improved in the sixth form. Students develop their learning skills well, which helps them to achieve very well in GCSE examinations because teaching is focused very well on examination requirements. Results are well above those of similar schools.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's value-added measures are well above those of other schools nationally
- Results in the tests at the end of Year 9 and in GCSE examinations are consistently well above national averages
- In the main school, students achieve very well in English, geography, modern foreign languages in all years and in art and design, information and communication technology, music and physical education in Years 10 and 11
- Achievement in mathematics is not as good as in English and science
- Students who have special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented achieve well

#### Commentary

1. When students enter the school, their attainment, as measured by their performance in the tests taken at the end of Year 6, is above the national average. Students achieve well throughout Years 7 to 9 and by the end of Year 9, standards overall have risen to well above the national average. When compared with similar schools<sup>2</sup>, students' attainment is also well above average. This is the case for both English and science in the tests taken in 2004, and attainment in mathematics was above that of similar schools. The school exceeded its targets set for that year in English, science and information and communication technology (ICT), but fell short of the target for mathematics. The overall improvement trend is broadly in line with the national trend.

#### *Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2004<sup>3</sup>*

| Standards in: | School results | National results |
|---------------|----------------|------------------|
| English       | 39.5 (35.5)    | n/a (33.4)       |
| Mathematics   | 38.9 (39.0)    | n/a (35.4)       |
| Science       | 37.4 (37.7)    | n/a (33.6)       |

*There were 234 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

2. The standards observed during the inspection in the current Year 9 are similar to those indicated by the test results. Throughout Key Stage 3<sup>4</sup>, students develop their learning skills well, with particular success in acquiring well above average literacy skills. This supports their work well in many subjects. Attainment in English and science is well above national expectations and above expectations in mathematics. Standards in music are in line with national expectations because students' progress has been limited by the inadequate accommodation for the subject. In all other subjects, attainment is either above or well

<sup>2</sup> Similar schools refers to schools with students gaining similar levels of attainment on entry as measured by the national tests at the end of Year 6.

<sup>3</sup> Results have not yet been fully validated nationally and are based on the school's figures.

<sup>4</sup> Key Stage 3 refers to Years 7, 8 and 9. Key Stage 4 refers to Years 10 and 11.

above national expectations. This represents good achievement overall, with students achieving particularly well in English, geography, history and modern foreign languages.

3. Students use their learning skills developed earlier to achieve very well in Years 10 & 11. In 2004, the proportion of students who gained five or more General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) grades A\*- C or the General National Vocational Qualification (GNVQ) equivalent was well above the average for all schools nationally and for similar schools. The trend in the school's average total point score per student remain below the national improvement trend, but the value-added measures are well above that of other schools nationally, confirming the good progress made by students during their time in the school. The school has maintained the standards reported in the last inspection and the overall performance in GCSE<sup>5</sup> has been well above the national average for the last four years. The school exceeded all its statutory targets for performance at this level.

**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  | 79 (77)        | 52 (52)          |
| Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades  | 92 (97)        | 89 (88)          |
| Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades  | 96 (99)        | 96 (96)          |
| Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects) | 42.7 (43.8)    | 34.9 (34.7)      |

*There were 211 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

4. The attainment of students currently in Year 11 is similar to that of previous years. As in Years 7 to 9, attainment in English and science is higher than in mathematics. Standards are above national expectations in mathematics, design and technology, citizenship and GNVQ ICT. In all other subjects, standards are well above the national expectations of the courses being followed. Particularly successful subjects in recent years are art and design, French, geography, ICT, history and design and technology. Relatively, students' performance is lower in the core subjects than in others across the curriculum but standards are still at least above national expectations. Students following vocational programmes are reaching above average standards.
5. The overall attainment of girls is higher than that of boys but by an amount lower than that found nationally. However, girls entered the school with relatively lower levels of attainment so that both boys and girls make similar levels of progress. The school monitors the performance of different groups of students closely to put appropriate interventions in place quickly to support any students where underperformance is identified. The numbers within each group are sometimes too small to make statistical comparisons reliable, but generally the data confirms that different groups achieve at similar rates. There is no significant difference in the relative performance levels of students of different ethnic backgrounds. Students of differing levels of prior attainment also make similar rates of progress.
6. The achievement of students who have special educational needs is good. This is because students are well known to teachers who plan well and provide appropriately for them in lessons. The school helps by providing very good information about the students, which is easily accessible to all and used well. Currently, there are no students who are at early stages of speaking English in the school. A good range of opportunities is provided for students who are identified as gifted or talented, particularly in Years 10 & 11, and they achieve well.

<sup>5</sup> This measure refers to the average total GCSE points score per student.

7. Students' high levels of language and literacy skills makes a major contribution to their good achievement in other subjects. Their mathematical skills are above expectations and meet the requirements of the other subjects they study well. Students' ICT skills are also above expectation and they use these well, often by using computers to produce high quality of work at home. However, students do not have sufficient access to computers in many subjects within the school day.

## Sixth form

### Main strengths

- Students achieve well and results have been above average for the last three years
- Results are well above average in biology, business studies, chemistry, critical thinking and ICT

### Standards in GCE A/AS level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2004

|  | School results | National results |
|--|----------------|------------------|
| Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades | 94.0 (94.9)    | 92.3 (92.3)      |
| Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades | 44.1 (48.2)    | 36.2 (35.6)      |
| Average point score per pupil            | 291.8 (263.9)  | 265.2 (258.2)    |

*There were 91 pupils in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

8. Students join the sixth form with levels of prior attainment which are only in line or slightly above those in many sixth forms, with some higher-attaining students in Year 11 leaving to study elsewhere. Students' very good attitudes and well-developed study skills enable them to achieve well. In 2004, examination results were above the national average overall. Results were well above the national average in biology, business studies, chemistry, critical thinking and ICT. Many students add to their A-level points by performing well in the additional critical thinking course. The number of students in the sixth form has more than doubled since the last inspection and examination results have improved significantly from below national averages to above the national average for the last three years.
9. Eight subjects were inspected in full in the sixth form. Students in the sixth form are currently achieving very well in ICT and business studies, well in English, biology, critical thinking, geography and satisfactorily in mathematics and French. Retention rates for students staying on after AS-level examinations and entering A2-level courses are high.

### Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students have very good attitudes to learning, behave well and develop very good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness in response to good provision. Their attendance and punctuality are good. Students' personal qualities and commitment are a significant factor in all they achieve. Improvement overall has been good, although the school knows that it still has work to do to ensure that spiritual and cultural development are as powerful as other strands of personal development.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are an asset to the school because their motivation and individual qualities underpin high academic, sporting, and personal achievement
- Most students behave very well so the atmosphere in school is calm, civil and purposeful
- When teaching is dull, with few chances for rapid progress by active involvement in meaningful work, a few students lose interest quickly, chatter and, at times, disrupt the lesson for others
- Students' personal development benefits well from enriching extra-curricular experiences, although opportunities to build on these systematically are missed in everyday routines such as tutor time
- Some instances of bullying are not resolved as decisively as students wish, in spite of very good efforts by the school to discourage all bullying, racism and intimidation

### Commentary

10. Students know that their parents believe in the value of a good education so, given the school's strong reputation for very good results, they arrive with very high expectations. They are more than willing to work hard to meet the challenges posed by interesting, thought-provoking lessons and action-packed practical activities. For example, in an inspiring Year 10 art lesson, the breathtaking pace and expertly planned observational and practical work on colour-mixing, following a visit to Tate Britain's 'Art of the Garden' exhibition, stimulated students to make the most of limited time. Their interest and enthusiasm for learning ensure that the school has a head start in fostering a culture where learning and personal achievement are at the heart of what it does. Students' intellectual curiosity, effort and capabilities underpin their success in different subjects, including sport, particularly when teaching brings out the best in them. Sometimes their own persistence and support from home see them through when they find the work boring or too challenging. They respond very well and thrive on lessons that are well structured and exciting.
11. Most students behave very well most of the time. A few find it difficult to settle, listen and concentrate in lessons that they have found dull or difficult before. As a result, on occasion, teaching carries on against an undercurrent of fidgeting and low-level chatter, which distracts other people and disrupts their learning. Instances of wilful misbehaviour and defiance occur rarely, but more often there is restlessness where work has not been fine-tuned to be challenging enough for different students. Outside lessons, the atmosphere is calm and civilised, in spite of the lack of space, because in school, relationships among students are very good and they enjoy being with friends.
12. The attitudes of the students who have special educational needs are good. They share the values of the school to a large extent and consequently they make good progress. Students with social, emotional and behavioural needs work against the school at times but, in line with the majority of students, when faced with good, well-paced teaching they also make positive gains in their learning.

**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2003-2004 (%)**

| Authorised absence |     | Unauthorised absence |     |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| School data        | 7.0 | School data          | 0.7 |
| 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.*

13. The lively and enriching range of activities outside lessons provides golden opportunities for students to use initiative, develop skills and talents and to experience different ways of learning. For instance, the chance to take part in water sports in France or master classes at universities challenged students' ideas of what they could achieve. Involvement in the 'Mizu' project and French exchanges aided better understanding of strands of Japanese and European culture. All these experiences reinforce students' considerable, existing personal qualities very well. In less successful lessons and aspects of school life, some opportunities to explore personal responses, value different ideas and trigger awe-inspiring moments are missed or overlooked at times. Some teachers forget to follow up the 'thought for the week', ask searching questions and value students' efforts to think for themselves. Students have a very clear sense of right and wrong, fairness and injustice. They notice when individuals are singled out for harsh criticism. Students are unsure that the school values their effort, range of views and experiences fully but appreciate when effort is made on their behalf. For example, they recognise that the quality of display varies but are pleased when a vibrant learning environment is created, for example in English.

**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                             | 1269                 | 101                               | 2                              |
| White – Irish                               | 3                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| White – any other White background          | 17                   | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Mixed – White and Asian                     | 4                    | 4                                 | 0                              |
| Mixed – any other mixed background          | 7                    | 1                                 | 0                              |
| Asian or Asian British – Indian             | 12                   | 5                                 | 0                              |
| Asian or Asian British – Pakistani          | 3                    | 0                                 | 0                              |

| Categories used in the Annual School Census         | No of pupils on roll | Number of fixed period exclusions | Number of permanent exclusions |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi                | 3                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background | 4                    | 2                                 | 0                              |
| Black or Black British – Caribbean                  | 1                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Black or Black British – African                    | 2                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Chinese   | 3                    | 0                                 | 0                              |
| Any other ethnic group                              | 1                    | 1                                 | 0                              |
| No ethnic group recorded                            | 6                    | 0                                 | 0                              |

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

14. Although some parents and students expressed concern about bad behaviour and bullying, in practice, both are unusual. As Year 11 students indicated, even students with behavioural difficulties respond well to sparkling teaching and good classroom management. Exclusion rates are not high. The school uses exclusion judiciously to deal with poor behaviour when other strategies are exhausted, mindful of its duty of care to the individual and to others. Governors have worked hard to ensure that everything is done to keep students in education, so permanent exclusion is used as a last resort. The school takes bullying very seriously and acts firmly to deal with it once the signs are detected. A few individuals find it very hard to ask for help, but friends do their best to ensure that no-one is left to suffer in silence. The school is working hard to discourage instances of bullying that happen outside school.

#### **Sixth form**

Sixth-form students are very well motivated, very keen to complete and do well on their chosen courses and very well behaved. Their attendance and punctuality are good.

#### **Main strengths**

- Students try to take full advantage of the opportunities they have to learn and develop their personal skills because they have high aspirations
- Sixth formers use initiative and volunteer readily, which results in a very mature and responsible contribution to school life

#### **Commentary**

15. Students appreciate the subject expertise and support of their teachers and the way in which lessons are planned and taught to match their need for information and understanding. They are highly self-motivated and very keen to gain all the experience and skills that will set them up for success at work or university, and in adult life.
16. They relish chances to use initiative, for instance in the community action service programme (CAS) and on projects such as production of the annual yearbook. Those with roles as head boy, head girl, and deputies take their responsibilities very seriously and enjoy being ambassadors for the school. Other students work actively to help younger students as peer counsellors and mentors, and by setting a very good example as role models of friendly, courteous, mature behaviour. All are quick to volunteer for charity fund-raising and organising events such as the May Ball or the school's charity 'slave auction'.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is good, including provision for the sixth form.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching is effectively enabling students to learn well. Work is planned consistently and students' positive attitudes mean that work is completed and followed through very well. Their work is very well assessed and the information communicated to students and used to improve the planning of lessons. Students are well targeted to raise achievement by means of support and extension for the higher attainers.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching has improved since the last inspection and is good, overall
- Teaching and learning are very good in English, science, geography, history, modern foreign languages and physical education
- Students who have special educational needs are taught well and make good progress
- The quality of day-to-day assessment is very good. It helps students understand how to improve their work further in all subjects except mathematics
- Low-level disruption in some lessons has an adverse impact on other students' achievements

### Commentary

17. Students' very good attitudes to learning and motivation to do well in examinations leads to most learning well by taking full advantage of the opportunities offered by their teachers. The quality of teaching is good, with many very good features. The proportion of very good and excellent teaching has increased significantly since the last inspection. Teaching and learning are very good in English, science, geography, history, modern foreign languages and physical education throughout the main school. As students develop their learning skills through the school, learning and achievement become better so that overall they are very good in Years 10 and 11.

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 191 lessons*

| Excellent | Very good | Good     | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor   | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|--------|-----------|
| 5 (3%)    | 57 (29%)  | 86 (45%) | 40 (21%)     | 3 (2%)         | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%)    |

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

18. Teachers plan and prepare their lessons very well. They make good use of national guidance from the Key Stage 3 Strategy to make sure that lessons have pace and structure. The three-part lesson is firmly embedded across the school. Lessons consistently start by sharing the learning objectives and intended outcomes. Students respond well to this, being clear about what is expected of them and giving them a structure to monitor their own progress towards achieving the objective through the lesson. Lessons routinely end with a review of learning and, in the best lessons, these activities give students a very clear view of precisely how they had developed their knowledge, skills or understanding and how this will be taken forward in the future. Students acquire new skills sequentially and teaching ensures that activities are included for learning to be consolidated. In a Year 9 German lesson, a carefully crafted set of activities led students progressively through the 'body' topic at a very good pace, with rapid changes of activity and excellent opportunities for speaking. Homework is used effectively for extension and further consolidation of skills being developed in school and students complete this conscientiously, often producing work of a very high quality.

19. Students want to engage in their own learning and teachers share these high expectations for them. The good relationships between students and teachers mean that learning is seen as a partnership, with each partner being clear of the responsibilities of the other. However, some students do not subscribe fully to this philosophy and in some lessons there is an undercurrent of chatter and reluctance on the part of some to work really hard. Then the lesson lacks pace for all because the flow of the lesson is interrupted and overall achievement lowered. This was the case in the less successful lessons when time was used refocusing some students on their work, mainly because it was not sufficiently interesting or challenging to engage them more fully. Students spoken with were appreciative of the additional support teachers give them outside lessons when they are encountering difficulties. Teachers use a wide range of activities to engage and keep students successfully motivated in the vast majority of lessons. In a Year 9 basketball lesson, the teacher used his knowledge and sheer enthusiasm for the game to gain the commitment of students during a vibrant and highly enjoyable lesson, where they made exceptionally good progress in developing their defensive skills and tactical strategies.
20. Teachers have very good subject expertise and their planning takes good account of the differing learning styles of groups of students. Students themselves are becoming aware of their own preferred learning style and using this as a focus for their learning, sometimes referring to them from their planners. This level of self-awareness and teachers' desire to ensure that teaching meets the needs and expectations of students has been developed well through the use of questionnaires in many subjects about teaching and learning. Work and activities are matched well to students' earlier learning and attainment, although sometimes work could be more challenging for the highest-attaining students. Teachers plan group work very well, using their detailed knowledge of students and how they learn. The use of teaching techniques to involve students in their learning, for example by evaluating the success of learning objectives, is very good. Many teachers have the benefit of interactive whiteboards and use these well to provide relevance and make lessons interesting for students.
21. Students in Years 10 and 11 have mature attitudes and are strongly focused on doing well in examinations. Teachers know what is required for students to succeed well in external examinations and prepare them thoroughly, thus contributing to their success. In a Year 11 music lesson considering a listening examination question, the use of games at the beginning and end enabled weaker students to be far more engaged than the subject matter would normally warrant and the remainder of the lesson addressed examination technique highly successfully. The school has focused attention on assessment of work to help students learn and achieve and this is much improved since the last inspection. Students' work is marked accurately. Students have a clear idea of how to improve and plan to do so. This guidance is very good throughout and includes genuine assessment for learning, such as student self-evaluation before and after topics.
22. A strength of the provision for students who have special educational needs is that teachers plan effectively to include all their students in learning. Teaching and learning are good, overall. Most teachers use the information in students' individual education plans well so that their lesson plans include specific strategies required by students who have special educational needs. Teaching assistants working alongside the class teacher provide good support and some subjects have developed further specific strategies to support ongoing work, such as using key words. Some individual education plans relating to literacy support are too general and do not yet show evidence of joint planning between the teacher and the learning support department to enable students to access the curriculum independently. This lack of joint planning is also evident in some examples where teaching assistants focused on one student but had not been involved in the planning of the lesson to focus the support precisely to the student's needs.

## **Sixth form**

Teaching and learning are good, overall. Students' work is very well marked and they understand how to improve.

### **Main strengths**

- Teaching is very good in biology, ICT and business studies
- Students are very well informed about their progress and how they can improve their standards

### **Commentary**

23. Many Year 13 students were taking A-level module examinations during the inspection and lessons were disrupted. In the lessons observed, teachers were conscious that many students were tired having just come out of examination in another subject, or were preparing for one later in the day. In these lessons, the pace and work was not as challenging as that seen in Year 12. Teaching in the sixth form is good, overall, and is a significant factor in the good progress that students make. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen.
24. Teachers know their students very well, often having taught them earlier in the main school. Students are skilled learners and teachers help them to develop independent learning and research skills further. Students make significant gains in their learning because of the structure teachers bring to lessons, their significant subject knowledge, challenging questions and responsiveness to students' interests and inputs. Students use their maturity very well to benefit from opportunities to work together in lessons; for example, in an excellent lesson considering the interface between human and computer interaction, students took responsibility for organising points to establish the psychological factors that affect interactions on whiteboards. This followed a very lively starter activity based on a party game which made learning interesting and fun, but still relevant to the students' age.
25. Students say that they have good knowledge of the level at which they are working. They are guided well by their teachers as to how they can improve their grades. The system of assessment in most subjects is very good. In these subjects, students have accurate information about their progress and teachers analyse data well to plan future work. Students are introduced to mark schemes and examination board criteria, which contribute greatly to the high standards obtained. Students are clear about what they need to do to improve their grades, and say that this helps them to achieve well.

### **The curriculum**

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum that satisfactorily meets the needs of students. Opportunities for enrichment, including extra-curricular activities are very good. Resources meet curriculum needs but parts of the accommodation are inadequate.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- High quality curriculum provision in many subjects results in very good achievement
- The curriculum is enriched through a very good range of extra-curricular activities, including sport
- Older students appreciate the flexibility that ensures that almost all follow courses of their choice
- Opportunities to study modern foreign languages are very good
- Too few subjects make use of ICT in the teaching and learning
- Opportunities for and access to vocational courses and work-related learning are limited
- Accommodation is restricting learning in some subjects

### **Commentary**

26. The school's status as a technology college is reflected appropriately in a curriculum that, overall, is satisfactory. While it has clear strengths, some opportunities vary and not all requirements are met. The requirement for a daily act of collective worship is not met in full, though a 'thought for the week' provides an opportunity for students to reflect on moral issues. Assemblies during the inspection provided students with very sensitive opportunities for personal reflection on relevant spiritual issues. The length of the school week meets national recommendations and is enhanced by the wide range of extra-curricular activities. The time allocation for subjects is appropriate.
27. Provision in English, science, geography, ICT, modern foreign languages, art and design and physical education is very good and there are strengths in most other subjects. In Years 7 to 9, all students study at least one modern foreign language. In Year 8, the majority choose a second from French, German and Spanish. Those experiencing difficulties with literacy skills are given support and an extra lesson in the language studied in Year 7. As a result of this very good provision, a high proportion of students continue languages in Years 10 and 11. Opportunities for citizenship are identified in schemes of work but student attainment has yet to be reported to parents. In line with the school's inclusive ethos, every effort is made to ensure students' option choices are met at the end of Year 9. A good range of general courses is offered. As expected from the school's specialist status, all students study a technological subject and ICT. However, not enough use is made of computers in day-to-day learning across the curriculum to meet the national requirements for subjects fully.
28. Work-related learning and vocational education are not sufficiently developed for all students. A GNVQ course in ICT is offered and some lower-attaining students take the opportunity to follow courses in catering, motor vehicle maintenance, applied GCSE in art and design or engineering run in conjunction with Brooklands College. Work experience is available on a voluntary basis at the end of Year 11, but attracts few students.
29. Since the last report, a regular and rigorous procedure for the monitoring of the curriculum by the leadership team has been introduced. In identifying strengths and weaknesses, this has resulted in improved teaching and learning and more focused in-service training.
30. Students who have special educational needs have very good access to the full curriculum. There is a good match between the needs of the students and the provision made by the school. The main provision for students' literacy difficulties is through the 'Successmaker' programme and reading support groups in Years 8 and 9, but additionally, students make good progress on reading and spelling programmes as well as through additional support for mathematical concepts and skills. The school effectively uses the support of a multi-agency support network, which provides advice on strategies for teaching staff to use, as well as behaviour modification, speech and language, social skills and assertiveness programmes, all of which are implemented well by teaching assistants with the relevant guidance and supervision. The provision for students in Years 10 and 11 consists of a combination of reduced timetables with the time being used to support core subjects, examination concessions and time at Brooklands College, where students have been successful on NVQ courses. Otherwise the development of alternative provision for students who have special educational needs is limited.
31. Students are offered a wide variety of enrichment opportunities. The range and quality of extra-curricular activity is particularly strong in music where high standards of public performance enhance the reputation of the school within the community and further afield, for example with a planned concert tour to the Netherlands. Cross-curricular arts projects involve feeder schools and members of the community well. Likewise in sport, students have the opportunity to participate in a large variety of sports, not only provided in school but also through links with local sporting organisations. This offers gifted and talented students excellent opportunities to develop their skills. Sports clubs ensure that all

interested students are able to take part. Other strengths include drama where large numbers take part in the productions, and school trips are offered in several areas, including the annual Normandy trip for Year 7. Students are further supported in their learning by support classes in several subjects, such as science and geography. ICT offers the opportunity to take an intensive GCSE course during the Easter holidays. As part of the programme for gifted and talented students, identified Year 9 and 10 students are offered a valuable course in critical thinking, which is intended to lead to an early entry for an AS-level qualification.

32. There are sufficient teaching and support staff to meet the needs of the curriculum, except for staff to support ICT across the school and too few technicians in design and technology. Most staff are well qualified for the subjects they teach.
33. Accommodation, which was judged to be inadequate at the last inspection, is still inadequate in spite of good management of available accommodation. The learning resources area is timetabled for class use for most of the week, limiting its use for the rest of the school to study independently. Access to ICT facilities is very limited for most departments. Accommodation for music is unsatisfactory as soundproofing is poor and is affecting the progress of students in developing practical skills. Art rooms are very cramped and once again this is restricting the development of some practical skills. The inadequate provision for outdoor activities in physical education is restricting breadth in the curriculum and the range of after-school activities that the department would wish to offer. Overall, lack of accommodation results in many staff teaching lessons outside their subject areas, lessening the development of strong subject identity and requiring resources to be carried around for each lesson. The school is trying to create a stimulating and safe environment in very difficult circumstances.
34. Resources are generally satisfactory although there is unsatisfactory access to ICT and resources in both mathematics and music are inadequate.

## **Sixth form**

The school provides a satisfactory sixth form curriculum with a wide range of academic courses and one vocational course.

### **Main strength and weakness**

- The curriculum offered meets the needs of those staying into the sixth form
- Statutory requirements for religious education are not met

### **Commentary**

35. A wide range of post-sixteen opportunities is available to students in the neighbourhood, but approximately half of Year 11 students join the school's sixth form. Those seeking vocational courses, other than in leisure and recreation, or general courses not offered by the school move elsewhere. A good range of academic courses enables students who choose to remain to follow their particular interests and aspirations. Additional lessons are provided outside normal hours as required.
36. The sixth-form study programme includes a core course in critical thinking to broaden students' learning skills and offers a useful opportunity for students to add to their A-level points score. This course covers topics involving spirituality but, overall, the school fails to comply with requirements regarding religious education and collective worship. All students in Year 12 benefit from the community programme. Participation in extra-curricular provision is satisfactory.
37. All students in Year 12 take part in voluntary work in the community and some continue with this in Year 13. They take personal responsibility for such activities as helping in primary schools, working with charity shops and producing newsletters. In the two short sessions seen, students were using their initiative and taking responsibility with considerable goodwill to produce a school newsletter and the 2005 school yearbook.
38. Students' studies are further enriched by working closely with professionals. Art students attend a 'life-drawing' class at a local studio while music students work with a composer in residence and a professional trio to support their composition of a film score. Scientists enjoy links with Reading University and language students are able to undertake work-experience in France and Germany.
39. Despite improvements in sixth-form accommodation, there are still significant weaknesses. There is no sixth-form study area which restricts students' opportunities to study together in school beyond lessons.

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

Students are very well known to staff and receive high quality care and support. Guidance based on rigorous assessment of students' personal needs and academic performance is very good. Students are involved well in school life because their views are sought regularly and usually taken seriously. Improvement has been satisfactory, being good in general care and academic guidance, but more limited in careers education and guidance.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Strong pastoral teamwork and very good assessment procedures provide a very firm foundation for high quality care for students, focused on helping them to do well at school
- Students are deeply grateful for the efforts made by individual staff to help them with their work or personal problems, which results in them feeling cared for and confident
- Although students views are sought regularly, they are not all convinced that relevant action results



- Limited careers education and guidance, including work experience, diminishes impartial guidance on study and career opportunities
- Induction arrangements for new students are very good, so students usually settle in very quickly

## **Commentary**

40. Students' welfare, including being in good shape to learn, is a high priority for the school. Very thorough assessment procedures ensure that teachers detect gaps between current and expected performance, so students can receive help such as regular reporting checks or work within a different set. Sometimes targets and comments in diaries are used particularly well to extend the help and advice given. Very good teamwork among pastoral staff, including year managers, enables teachers and tutors to work very well with individuals to ensure that their personal and academic difficulties can be resolved.
41. In general, students feel safe and confident, particularly because individual staff go out of their way to give so much help and encouragement. However, for some older students, this is not always the case and they would value more support, such as for completion of coursework. Overall, students find staff really helpful with problems, as most are approachable and responsive. Local ministers from the diocese also provide valuable additional support for staff and students.
42. The school has used some innovative approaches to gathering students' views and involving them in shaping its future, such as the 'Imagine Heathside' research project, based on a positive approach to school development. During the inspection, students on the school council were working independently to respond to student concerns. While students acknowledge that their views are canvassed quite regularly, their frame of reference and time-scale are immediate and do not always understand fully that action follows from their input. Students, representing all abilities and backgrounds, appreciate being treated in a mature way, for example being listened to carefully when asking about a piece of work. However, occasional instances of unfair treatment detract from the students' sense of full and beneficial consultation.
43. Although guidance in general is very good, the school is less strong in providing a comprehensive programme of careers education, including work experience and decision-making. The Connexions adviser gives good guidance but is only available for a limited time each week. Advice from staff, based on knowledge of academic courses and subjects is also good, but the school's planning does not do enough to ensure that all students have the depth and breadth of understanding of the world of work. Opportunities are missed for all students to meet and work with different people in a wide range of different settings such as businesses, medical centres and service industries to gain first-hand experience of the reality of different work practices that shape decisions on what to do after school. However, their preparation for the next steps taken, whether into further education, training or employment, is satisfactory and includes visits to higher education fairs, interviews with careers advisers and access to specialist visitors to the school.
44. Students new to the school feel that very good preparation prior to entry enabled them to enjoy the greater variety of subjects and independence allowed in practical work. They like being here because the thorough induction built confidence. They have good understanding of how systems such as target setting and tutoring work and enjoy lively creative and practical subjects.
45. The individual education plans for students who have emotional, social and behavioural special educational needs are produced and monitored by the heads of year in consultation with the special needs co-ordinator. This is effective because it provides continuity of provision as well as relevant access to specialist help when it is needed. Students have access to the learning support facilities before school and during breaks to access ICT programmes or to take advantage of the safe haven provided for them.

## **Sixth form**

As in the main school, students receive very good care and support. They have good opportunities to influence school life through expressing their views, which are sought and acted on effectively.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Close working relationships and thorough assessment procedures provide students with very well-informed support for their learning
- Lack of study and relaxation areas for students makes it difficult for them to have a quick word with staff to nip some work and personal problems in the bud, or to share first thoughts about the future

### **Commentary**

46. Sixth-form students feel that the atmosphere is friendly and the teachers are supportive. The support of strong friendships and good working relationships with staff ensure that students feel quietly confident. As work is assessed carefully to ensure that students have a good idea of mark schemes, examination criteria and how they are doing, they are clear about what they need to do to achieve or even exceed predicted grades. Regular consultation evenings and support in lessons ensure that they stay on track.
47. Limited space for students to meet, and for private study contribute to a feeling that guidance on other matters is not always appropriate or timely. Students often use friends for moral support, but everyday opportunities for informal conversations and for more formal discussions with adults of how to access particular courses are limited by inadequacies in sixth-form accommodation.

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

The school works well with parents. Links with the community and other schools are good. Community programmes linked to the school's specialist status bring benefits to others, particularly in primary schools.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Most parents value education highly and want to do all they can to ensure that their children achieve the academic success of which they are capable, which is a significant factor in students' results
- Although communication with parents is good overall, the school recognises that it still has work to do to ensure that all parents feel as fully informed as possible
- Enriching experiences, based on the school's links with the wider community, enhance students' personal development and aspirations strongly

### **Commentary**

#### **Main school and sixth form**

48. Parents are broadly satisfied with what the school does for their children, particularly its expectations of hard work and how well it helps new students to settle into Year 7. Parents attend events, productions and meetings to discuss progress in very high numbers, indicating very strong support for their children's education and achievement. As yet, the school has not harnessed this great parental commitment to educational success to best effect, but parents' support for their children makes a huge contribution to the experiences they have, their personal qualities, motivation and achievements. Parents readily buy textbooks for their children to annotate and collect children from extra-curricular activities.
49. As parents' expectations are high, when they notice inconsistencies in the quality of the school's work, inevitably they are disappointed and sometimes disgruntled. Thus a small proportion was quite critical of how well the school communicates with them and handles

complaints. Many more parents feel that they are made welcome, that their children are helped constructively and praise in full the staff and school.

50. Information about progress is not as frequent, timely or precise, as some parents would wish. Inspectors agree that the quality of students' annual reports, though satisfactory, could be better, particularly in terms of consistency and clarity about the specific steps students need to take to ensure that they learn and achieve all they can. Parents are also provided with additional data in interim reports. The school knows that information about everyday school life and procedures needs to be shared more effectively with parents and, rightly, is developing an efficient web-site as part of its drive to improve communication.
51. The school benefits from a good range of links with the immediate and wider community, including those related to its status as a specialist college and through the valuable network of contacts facilitated by its governing body. As planned for as part of its specialist college status, local primary schools benefit from science, ICT and technology activities. The school's own students have participated in many stimulating activities such as diverse technology and mathematics problem-solving competitions, space centre activities at Surrey University, residential visits in France and a rich range of musical performances. All these foster development of skills, talents and personal qualities, including leadership and co-operation, which help students to become mature and accomplished young people by the time they leave Heathside.
52. The school meets its statutory requirements well in respect of its students who have special needs. Good links have been developed with feeder primary schools and parents. In addition, a multi-agency group meets regularly to support students and the school. Students are included well in extra-curricular activities and clubs. The move to monitor the extent to which this occurs is an example of the inclusive nature of the school.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership, management and governance of the school are good. The principal's very good leadership has fostered a very strong sense of corporate responsibility and teamwork amongst the staff. Other key staff provide effective leadership and management of their areas. The use of performance data and teachers' on-going assessments to monitor and track students' progress are particular strengths and provide the school with a clear picture for future development. Very good systems are in place for the review and professional development of staff.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The principal is a very good leader, has built an effective team of senior and middle managers and is a very good role model, for students and staff, in his promotion of learning
- The school is popular with parents and is greatly respected by members of the local community for the standards it achieves
- Governance is good
- Continuing professional development supports the steady improvement of the school
- Management in the vast majority of departments is effective
- Arrangements are not effectively providing a daily act of collective worship

### **Commentary**

53. The work of the governing body is good. Governors have vision for the school's future development and take an active role in the leadership of the school. The governors share a good understanding of the school's strengths and those areas that require further improvement. The committee system is strong and is effectively enabling governors to make informed judgements when holding the school to account for the educational standards achieved and the quality of education provided. Governors are well briefed about

the financial status of the school. They are effective in fulfilling their statutory duties, but there are still some details that require further attention. The school does not fully meet the legal requirement relating to the provision of a daily act of collective worship, although some improvements have been made in the light of the conclusions of the previous report.

54. The principal is a very good leader. Under his leadership the school has gone from strength to strength and made good improvement since the last inspection. Teamwork in the school is very strong and has been a powerful force in facing some difficult decisions over recent years. For several years, the school has struggled to work within the budget it has been allocated and some difficult decisions over staffing levels and workload have had to be made. Very good links have been established with national and international companies that are based in the area. The school has greatly benefited from their expertise, for example on the governing body and in a variety of other informal situations.
55. The principal has fostered a very strong sense of corporate responsibility and teamwork amongst the staff, stemming from the strength of shared leadership of the principal and vice-principal. In turn, staff are extremely loyal and very committed to the students and the school's goals. The principal, in common with his team of key staff and governors, is ambitious and determined to see the school continue to improve. He is a very good role model and strongly promotes the idea and practice of life-long learning. His own research has been instrumental in shaping his style of leadership and having completed a doctorate himself he is keen to encourage other staff to do the same. Several have taken up the challenge and the school has provided some financial assistance. The school is well respected by parents and members of the local community. It is heavily oversubscribed.
56. The quality of leadership of other key staff in carrying out their delegated responsibilities is good, varying from very good to satisfactory. Several are relatively new to the school and yet to achieve a full impact on standards. There are notable strengths in the way that year heads monitor students' work and behaviour and the very good support and level of care they receive. The approach to data collection is very rigorous, analysing patterns of performance and using the findings to set targets and shape improvements to teaching and learning. The work of some newly-appointed middle managers has not been monitored sufficiently to ensure that they are given the help they need to meet the challenges they face. The school's strengths and weaknesses are well understood. The school has responded fully to the key issue of the previous inspection to monitor more closely the quality of teaching and learning. Substantial progress has been made in embedding self-evaluation of practice as the norm in the school. There is no sense of complacency as all colleagues are held to account. A rolling programme of departmental reviews is part of this process as well as the annual departmental audit which, in turn, informs subsequent development plans. The former has allowed senior management a better overview of the quality of subject contributions. As there is an element of peer observation in this programme, it has also proved to be a valuable training tool for other colleagues and helped to share best practice. These actions have largely been successful in improving standards across all departments.
57. A strength of the school is its strong focus through continuous professional development on teaching and learning. There is a consistent, sustained drive for further improvement. The induction of new teachers is good. Arrangements to ensure that all new staff receive appropriate support are very good and there is a full programme for induction of new staff. The school has very strong links with a range of higher education establishments and arrangements for supporting a large number of students participating in initial teacher training courses are very good. Many of these students are subsequently successfully employed by the school.
58. There is a clear vision about the direction for the further development of the learning support department. All statutory requirements are well met and there has been good

progress since the last inspection. Overall, the individual education plans are comprehensive with targets well matched to strategies, although they are not sufficiently specific with regard to literacy. Practice has been developed to ensure that students who have special educational needs make good progress. The support and training for teaching assistants has created an efficient team performing a good mixture of administration, individual student support and in-class work. The arrangement to take advantage of the expertise of a number of agencies on behalf of the students in the school is very good.

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

| Income and expenditure (£) |           |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| Total income               | 4,783,928 |
| Total expenditure          | 4,640,916 |
| Expenditure per pupil      | 3,161     |

| Balances (£)                             |           |
|--|-----------|
| Balance from previous year               | -(84,344) |
| Balance carried forward to the next year | 58,668    |

59. The school's sixth-form accommodation has been accomplished through the use of leasing agreements. These agreements are imposing a significant constraint on the availability of funds for the curriculum and are restricting further development of the school. Until recently the school was unable to meet these costs with the available annual funding and had a considerable overspend. The budget has now been brought into line by increasing the size of many classes in the main school and the lesson contact time of teachers. Other necessary measures include significantly reducing the spending on resources for subjects, ICT, and building maintenance costs. The school has used the additional opportunities from special technology status well to counteract some of these insufficiencies.
60. The school has achieved most of the improvements called for in the auditors' report but is not making a full critical analysis of costs against other similar schools. Costs are not sufficiently estimated in department and whole-school development plans, to inform future financial planning. The school applies the principles of getting best value well.

## **Sixth form**

Leadership of the sixth form is good. The sixth form is well led by an enthusiastic team and organisational routines run smoothly. The positive relationships that exist between teachers and students contribute strongly to the success of the sixth form.

### **Main strength and weakness**

- Leadership of the sixth form and teamwork are good
- Inadequate study facilities result in students studying at home during day-time sessions

### **Commentary**

61. In recent years, the numbers of students choosing to stay on into the sixth form have grown. The school is nevertheless keen to improve on this and to gain a better understanding of why around half of students at the end of Year 11 choose to continue their studies elsewhere. Constructive links with a local college allow students from both centres to attend courses not available in their 'home' centre. Currently, this applies to a very small number of students but it does reflect the extent to which the school is willing to find ways of maximising its resources whilst meeting the wishes of students. The majority of students are highly motivated to do well and many choose, in agreement with the school, to work and study at home during day-time sessions. In part, this overcomes the inadequate accommodation and the lack of a specific sixth-form study area.
62. Leadership and management of the sixth form are good. The long-term vision appropriately reflects the challenges the school is facing, for example regarding attendance and ensuring the curriculum is matched to students' needs. The members of the new management team in the sixth form have made a good start in establishing themselves in their roles under the guidance of the vice-principal. Systems in the main school and sixth form are similar and as a result, self-evaluation is secure. Involvement in subject reviews, alongside day-to-day management tasks, provides them with a clear picture of the extent to which the key priorities for the sixth form are being led and managed across the school. The management shares a common view about improvement, good communication and developing teamwork. The plan for improvement provides the basis for prioritising developments. Weaknesses in the performance of an individual department have been identified, but action taken to date has not yet brought substantial improvement. In almost all subjects, leadership and management are good or better with good improvement since the last inspection.

## **OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

### **Work-related learning**

Provision for work-related learning is unsatisfactory.

### **Main weaknesses**

- Students have some opportunities to develop their understanding in subjects across the curriculum, but these are too limited
  - Work-related learning activities are not co-ordinated well across the curriculum
63. All students in Years 10 and 11 are provided with some vocational contexts for their learning. All take a GCSE short course in information and communication technology or a GNVQ level 2 course in the subject. A further third take a GCSE in business studies. Results in all cases are above average. Vocational provision is however limited, as the school curriculum has a strongly academic bias. Students gain some awareness of work-related learning through contributions by other subjects such as geography, physical education and science and enhancement sessions. For example, after-school critical thinking sessions for gifted and talented students include the planned development of the

work-related learning skills of rapid decision-making and data interpretation in problem solving. About twenty students are involved in two groups on Young Enterprise projects, such as the organising and marketing of a school disco with useful input from a business mentor, although some time was wasted during the session observed. A small number of students attend vocational courses at Brooklands. The students interviewed were enjoying the courses but had limited understanding of aspects of work-related learning, such as conditions of work.

64. Student feedback on previous work experience arrangements for all indicated that many found the experience of only limited value to them as many of the placements had little relevance to either their interests or intended careers. As a response to this, current arrangements offer work experience on a voluntary basis and only a small number of students undertake it after GCSE examinations via the Trident Project. Consequently, students' practical knowledge is largely dependent on whether they have part-time employment, although the school has audited this experience and a high proportion of the older students have part-time work, but overall students have not formally reflected on how they learn through work.
65. A co-ordinator has been appointed recently and an audit for work-related learning which identifies input from various sources has been completed. Some initiatives have been identified to improve cross-curricular provision and the audit provides a good basis for future planning, but the lack of an action plan to embed vocational and work-related learning more firmly in the curriculum and the fragmentation of leadership roles for this area reduce their current impact. Work-related learning activities are not yet co-ordinated well enough across the curriculum to ensure that all students have a basic entitlement to meet national guidelines. Year 9 students have some lessons about the world of work but these only provide an introduction to the topic. There is no planned programme of careers education for all students in Years 10 and 11 other than annual events such as 'Enterprise Day'. Individual students are supported well by interviews with the Connexions adviser through appointments for those who wish and targeted group sessions, but careers information is not conveniently sited for all students to access. Connections with local companies, such as Sony, do give some students a valuable opportunity to prepare for mock interviews.
66. The school has not yet developed a system to monitor students' experiences and achievements. Overall arrangements for work-related learning do not meet national guidance and the effectiveness of the school's provision is unsatisfactory.



## PART C: SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

#### English

Provision in English is very good.

|                       | Year 9             | Year 11            |
|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Standards             | Well above average | Well above average |
| Achievement           | Very good          | Very good          |
| Teaching and learning | Very good          | Very good          |

|                                    |           |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
| Leadership                         | Very good |
| Management                         | Good      |
| Progress since the last inspection | Good      |

#### Main strengths

- Students achieve very well and they have very good attitudes to work
- Teaching is consistently good and assessment very well used
- Planning for lessons is thorough with activities that engage the students very well
- Leadership and management are effective with good teamwork and collaboration

#### Commentary

67. Students enter the school with above average attainment in English. In the national tests taken at the end of Year 9, students perform consistently well above the national average. In 2004, three out of four students gained the higher Level 6 or more, which was a significant rise on previous years and better than mathematics or science. GCSE results in 2004, in English language and English literature, were above the national average though few students gained A\* or A grades in comparison with their other subjects. English language results have remained stable over the last three years. Results in English literature, for which almost every student is entered, have been more varied and are generally better than English language. Although boys' results are above average, they are outperformed by girls in both GCSE examinations.
68. Currently, students in all years are attaining well above average standards in much of their work. Almost all students are highly motivated to do as well as they can and this helps them to achieve at a very good rate as they progress through the school. Skills in speaking and listening are well developed and students develop more confidence because they regularly discuss ideas in pairs and groups before presenting their findings in lessons. Reading is good in that all students read and understand a range of texts studied in class. They make good use of the Internet for research although access to the learning resource centre and to library books is seriously limited. Younger students are encouraged to read independently in some tutor periods, though few admit to reading for pleasure at other times. Students write fluently, generally with a good standard of accuracy. They frequently word process their writing which enables them to correct and edit efficiently. There is much lively, descriptive writing in all years, well planned, drafted and improved to a standard of which they are rightly proud. Students develop analytical skills early by looking at style and literary devices in poetry, stories and plays. By Year 11, there are many examples of high quality, enthusiastic personal responses to texts in literature. Students with learning or behaviour difficulties make very good progress, especially when taught in small classes where they have extra support from their teachers.
69. Teaching is enthusiastic and consistently challenging, stemming from a very thorough planning of work, matched sensitively to students' needs. Teachers use a variety of

strategies to engage students in both independent and collaborative work and time is used productively. Teachers' knowledge of teaching styles and how students learn is very good and an area of significant improvement since the last inspection. Students enjoy and learn very well from the variety of activities which ensure they are fully involved. Higher-attaining students with a special talent for English make good contributions to group work, though at times they could be given more difficult challenges. All lessons are characterised by very good relationships and a positive approach. Teachers give a clear explanation of what is to be learned and often, at the end of the lesson, students evaluate how successful their learning has been. Assessment of students' finished coursework is accurate and helpful. Students know how well they are doing and what they must do to improve.

70. Leadership is very good with clear priorities for development. The department is well managed with a strength in teamwork. Recent appointments have enabled new initiatives to be introduced. Effective delegation means that teachers are clear about their roles and responsibilities and there is a strong consistency in approach. Teachers share a common purpose and are determined to do their best by the students. Students feel secure in knowing that similar routines are adopted and that expectations of work and behaviour are high. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

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

71. The standard achieved in reading and writing in subjects across the curriculum is well above average, although there is little provision for monitoring this. Students are encouraged to read around a topic and organise their writing appropriately for a task. Many teachers give good guidance in structuring written work by creating writing frames and listing key points. Students speak confidently and opportunities given for lively discussion is a strength in many subjects. Most students listen well to each other and show respect for others' views, although occasionally noisy behaviour of a minority results from weak class management. The learning resource centre is unsatisfactory in supporting independent reading and study. In spite of its helpful staff, who distribute boxes of books to teachers on requested topics, access for students is severely restricted. For the majority of the day, the learning resource centre is timetabled as a teaching room. After school, the computers are used well by students for homework, but the stock of books is insufficient for the size of the school.

### **Modern foreign languages**

Provision in modern foreign languages is very good.

|                       | Year 9                 | Year 11            |
|-----------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Standards             | Well above expectation | Well above average |
| Achievement           | Very good              | Very good          |
| Teaching and learning | Very good              | Very good          |

|                                    |           |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
| Leadership                         | Very good |
| Management                         | Very good |
| Progress since the last inspection | Good      |

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards are consistently well above the national average and students achieve very well
- Lessons are very well planned, and this helps students to learn very effectively
- A strong assessment system makes sure that students and teachers know what they are aiming for

- In a minority of lessons, students do not have enough opportunities to develop confidence in their speaking skills

### **Commentary**

72. Teacher assessments for students at the end of Year 9 are well above those reported nationally. GCSE examination results in both French and German have been consistently well above the national average in the last three years. In 2004, after taking into account the differences in performance between different subjects nationally, analysis shows that students' grades in French and German were on average half a grade higher than in the other subjects they took.

73. Standards seen during the inspection correspond closely to the outcomes of teacher assessments. By the end of Year 9, students are doing lengthy pieces of accurate extended writing which show good knowledge of vocabulary and very good use of past, present and future tenses. In an excellent Year 9 German lesson, students made rapid progress on the topic of health and by the end of the lesson were making up complex sentences using two tenses. Achievement is very good; the vast majority of students are making good progress in two languages. In Year 11, students' written coursework shows very good use of vocabulary across a range of topics, coupled with good levels of accuracy and good use of sentence structure. Mock examination results show well above average results in the skills of reading and listening. In a minority of lessons, but more noticeably in Year 11, standards in speaking are somewhat lower than in the other three skills. Overall, however, students are achieving very well.
74. Lessons are very well planned. The objectives are well thought through and clearly explained to students. All lessons contain a good variety of learning activities such as questions and answers, choral repetition, matching exercises and paired work. In a Year 8 French lesson, for example, students practised building up sentences by rearranging cards and reading the sentences aloud. Teachers consistently use the language they are teaching for the majority of the lesson. At the end of lessons, teachers regularly check up to see how well students have progressed. At GCSE level, the topics and grammar are covered very thoroughly and students' performance is carefully monitored to make sure that they do as well as they can. In a minority of lessons, students do not have enough opportunities to build up their speaking skills in small steps and therefore are not sufficiently confident and fluent. Students have very good attitudes to learning and this is an important factor in helping them to do well.
75. Very strong leadership has focused on developing teaching and learning. This is reflected in the consistent approach to planning lessons with clear linguistic objectives. Schemes of work have been developed to reflect, in detail, the government's modern languages framework. Assessment and procedures for tracking student progress are very well managed and ensure that both students and teachers know what they are aiming for. Spanish is now available for younger students, meaning that three languages are offered. There has been good improvement since the last inspection.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is satisfactory.

|                       | Year 9        | Year 11       |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Standards             | Above average | Above average |
| Achievement           | Satisfactory  | Satisfactory  |
| Teaching and learning | Satisfactory  | Satisfactory  |

|                                    |              |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Leadership                         | Satisfactory |
| Management                         | Satisfactory |
| Progress since previous inspection | Satisfactory |

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve examination results that are well above average
- Students of all abilities have positive attitudes and this contributes to the standards achieved
- Teaching is not consistently good enough in challenging and extending all groups of students

### **Commentary**

76. In 2004, test results at the end of Year 9 were well above the national average compared with all schools and above average for similar schools. The GCSE results were well above the national averages for all schools but average for similar schools. Fewer students than should be expected achieved the highest grade A\*. There was little significant difference in the performance of boys and girls.

77. When they start in Year 7, students' overall standards are above average. These standards are maintained and across all Years 7 to 11 the standards are above average in all areas of number, algebra, geometry and statistics. Students are strongest at applying routine methods they have been taught. This was seen in work, for example on solving linear and quadratic equations and in the correct use of notation when handling indices. Students are less strong when having to think for themselves, to explore ideas or to explain the mathematics they are doing. This is because students tend to rely on teacher instruction and their main experience is of textbook-type exercises. Whilst the students' presentation of work is satisfactory, this often shows less care and pride than should be expected.
78. Lessons are well prepared. Objectives are clear and help to focus learning. Lessons often incorporate a lively activity at the start, for example using mini-whiteboards to involve all students, and a useful review of what has been learnt at the end. Teachers know individual students well, which together with the setting arrangements, helps most to make satisfactory progress. On-going assessment is good in lessons, such as showing fingers to indicate understanding, and written work is checked regularly. Teachers encourage and support students well. Homework routinely contributes to learning. All the teachers have good general teaching skills, although the mix of subject expertise limits the mathematical challenge in some classes.
79. A major strength is the attitude of the students. They concentrate and work hard in class, and together with their efforts outside school, this contributes significantly to the standards being achieved by both high and low-attaining students.
80. Weaknesses include the overuse of worksheet exercises in lessons, in some cases because of limited resources or specialist rooms. Too little use is made of paired or group discussion, or individuals explaining ideas at the board to support understanding. Sometimes, because of limited mathematical expertise, teacher questioning is not open-ended to encourage students to think for themselves and learn from exploring ideas. This also means that higher-attaining students are not consistently challenged. Although now being developed, the use of ICT has yet to properly support learning. The tracking of individual student progress is at a very early stage.
81. Against a background of staff shortages and changes, leadership and management have ensured that students continue to achieve GCSE results that are well above the national average. The challenge for leadership now is to translate the current teaching strengths into stronger and more rigorous mathematical provision. The mix of staff leads to inconsistency in the quality of teaching, which lacks clear co-ordination, although there are whole-school arrangements to monitor provision. Planning for development does not make clear enough the priorities, the costs, or how improvements will be checked. Developments make insufficient use of analysing performance data. However, other barriers to further improvement have been the poor accommodation and the restricted funding for resources. Improvement has been satisfactory because results have been maintained since the last inspection and considering what can reasonably be expected in the circumstances of significant changes and shortage of experienced staff.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

82. Students make effective use of their good mathematical skills in other subjects. For example, GCSE students skilfully handle formulae in physics and competently interpret statistics in geography. However, there is insufficient awareness of the opportunities to apply mathematics in design and technology and also Year 7 units on measurement are duplicated in both science and mathematics provision. A co-ordinated whole-school approach to mathematics across the curriculum has not yet been developed.

## SCIENCE

Provision in science is very good.

|                       | Year 9             | Year 11            |
|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Standards             | Well above average | Well above average |
| Achievement           | Good               | Good               |
| Teaching and learning | Very good          | Very good          |

  

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Leadership                             | Very good |
| Management                             | Very good |
| Progress since the previous inspection | Very good |

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' good attitudes contribute well to their very good attainment and good achievement, particularly in Years 10 and 11
- Very good departmental leadership is leading to very good teaching and learning which is strongly consistent across the department
- Teachers have very good knowledge of and relationships with the students; day-to-day assessment is very strong and is used well in lesson planning

### Commentary

83. In 2004, results in the Year 9 tests were well above the national average, at all levels, including the highest. They were well above average when compared with similar schools and, at the higher levels 6 and 7, when compared with prior attainment. Overall, results met expectations in that students entered the school well above average and attained results commensurate with their attainment. At GCSE, results from 2002 to 2004 were well above average, in spite of some decline in the latter years. Both boys and girls were well above their respective averages, in spite of some differences on entry.
84. Standards in lessons and in students' work are well above average, reflecting very good attitudes to work in most cases. Standards in Year 7 and 8 are very good and very well maintained across the range of attainment. The Year 7 induction module set the scene by allowing very good work on measurement and data handling. Numerical work remains very good throughout, with particular strength in physics computation, especially in forces and electricity, and graphical work at all ages. Investigatory work is a strength, resulting from teachers' very good preparatory work. Literacy is also very good, developing in Year 9 research homeworks, for example on health matters, and in coursework in Years 10 and 11. Very good knowledge and understanding is built up, in all three sciences, by a process that gives scope for independent research, group work, Internet research and report back to other students. The standard and presentation of work is well kept up in lower-attaining sets, including those studying single award modular science and applied science. Thus, achievement overall is good.
85. Teaching has been strengthened by a strong departmental initiative on assessment and lesson planning. The implementation and use of day-to-day assessment is a major strength. Information is gained from starter activities and from summary sessions. Students are involved strongly in the process of evaluating learning objectives. Teachers use information to plan working groups and to adjust teaching methods. Students begin a new topic with their own overview of their state of knowledge. Some teaching, particularly in Years 10 and 11, is very innovative. One example was the use of group activities to aid learning of the reactions of carbonates. Very good use was made of ICT to allow lower-attaining students to acquire knowledge of the solar system, but also of text to allow learning about the electromagnetic spectrum and renewable energy. The knowledge of assessment aided students in producing very good coursework.

86. Both leadership and teamwork are very strong and have supported a concerted departmental effort at introducing assessment for learning in a very coherent and effective way. New teachers are well inducted, apply the departmental policies very well and feel well supported. Monitoring of student achievement is a strength, as is the effort made to monitor the quality of teaching. Links with primary schools and with higher education are very good. The school feels that staffing is a barrier to learning and there is one current teaching vacancy, but the quality of the staff they have is very good across all three science disciplines. ICT is used well, but the standard of ICT resources is below that expected in a technology college and there is a shortage of texts for homework and library use. The department is supported well by a team of technicians; practicals are well resourced and safely implemented. Accommodation, despite some refurbishment, is just satisfactory and does impinge on standards in some rooms, where for example the tables are too narrow for work on electrical circuits.
87. Since the previous inspection, there has been progress in achievement, in teaching and in assessment, including the development of investigation and independent learning. In these important aspects, provision has improved from satisfactory to very good. Improvement therefore has been very good.

### INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The school provides either a short GCSE course or GNVQ Intermediate course to all students. Students are offered opportunities to convert the short course into a full GCSE.

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

|                                    | Year 9             | Year 11            |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Standards                          | Above expectations | Well above average |
| Achievement                        | Good               | Very good          |
| Teaching and learning              | Good               | Very good          |
| Leadership                         | Very good          |                    |
| Management                         | Very good          |                    |
| Progress since the last inspection | Good               |                    |

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards and students' achievement are well above average in Year 11 because of the very good teaching
- GNVQ students achieve well because of the approaches taken by teachers
- Some teaching is less effective in larger groups and when there are technical problems
- Students get good advice and the assessment system accurately tracks individual progress
- The use of ICT in other subjects is unsatisfactory because students have limited access to rooms with computers

### Commentary

88. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 in 2004 indicate that nearly all students attain highly compared to the national statistics. These assessments are based on an excellent monitoring and assessment system that is very accurate. Assessment results have been maintained over the last four years. GCSE results in 2004 were well above the national average. The difference between the results of boys and girls is much closer than nationally, with girls doing slightly better than the boys. Most students following the intermediate GNVQ course completed the course and achieved results above the national average. This has helped these students to gain the necessary access requirements for the next stage of education.



89. Many students have above average ICT competence when they start of the course. The good stimulating teaching in Years 7 to 9 ensures that all students make further progress. By the end of Year 9, nearly every student is achieving above the level expected nationally because of the excellent learning materials that have been specially adapted and effectively organised for each lesson. Students in Year 7 are able to design their own PowerPoint presentations. By the end of Year 9, students progress well to being able to interpret and present information from sensors, and design their own animated web pages to help the teaching of modern foreign languages.

90. The GCSE students' achievements and standards of work are in line with the higher grades. In lessons, students co-operate very well and help each other. This helps to make learning more effective and further raises achievement. Lower-attaining students and those with special educational needs are directed towards the GNVQ intermediate course. They make good progress because of the very good planning and sensitive teaching that builds students' confidence. The standard of work seen in GNVQ portfolios is above average.
91. Overall, teaching and learning are good, but teachers are less effective when there are large groups, insufficient computers and technical problems due to older equipment and software. Variations in the quality of teaching and expectations cause some students to lack concentration and focus. Teachers have persuasive subject knowledge and make very good use of technology. Students apply mathematical skills very well and language development is promoted very well through skilful questioning that reinforces good understanding. Students in Year 9 have a lack of continuity because of timetabling with drama. GCSE and GNVQ students get very good advice and teaching constantly relates the learning experiences to the requirements of examinations. Students are able to identify the gaps in their learning due to the excellent monitoring and assessment system.
92. The school has effectively spread the responsibilities for championing the development of ICT in the school. There are very good management systems in place. The design of the learning programmes ensures that all students have opportunities to reach at least the national average; the most gifted students are not so well catered for. Financial costs are not sufficiently estimated in development planning. The department provides an intensive enhancement course for students who wish to extend their qualifications to a full GCSE in the Easter break. High standards have been maintained and assessment improved since the last report.

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

93. Overall, provision is unsatisfactory because there is insufficient access to computers for many subjects. In English, younger students produce leaflets with text and images. Mathematics, geography, history, religious education, and music make limited use of ICT in students' work. The learning resources centre is used mostly as a teaching room throughout the week, which inhibits access for students when it is needed as part of ongoing lessons. In science and modern foreign languages the situation is improving due to the better use of ICT subject software. In art, wireless laptops have been introduced, in common with other areas of the school; however, there are some poor connections problems that affect achievement adversely. Students have good competence in using ICT and they use computers well at home to support learning. The specialist technology funding has been well targeted towards establishing very good facilities for computer-aided design and manufacturing in technology, and students are able to program electronic devices to control equipment. The introduction of interactive whiteboards in other departments is having a marked impact on improving the quality of teaching and they are being used well by teachers.

### **HUMANITIES**

#### **Geography**

Provision in geography is very good.

|                       | Year 9                  | Year 11            |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Standards             | Well above expectations | Well above average |
| Achievement           | Very good               | Very good          |
| Teaching and learning | Very good               | Very good          |
| Leadership            | Very good               |                    |

|                                    |           |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
| Management                         | Very good |
| Progress since the last inspection | Very good |

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students achieve very good results in GCSE
- Most teaching is good or very good and assessment is used very well to identify targets for improvement
- Field work is used very effectively in many year groups to generate interest and to improve learning
- In several lessons, low level disruption and restive behaviour are not well managed and progress is restricted
- There are limited opportunities for the development of ICT skills for students in Years 7 to 9

## **Commentary**

94. Students join the school with standards above the nationally expected level. Teacher assessments, in 2004, at the end of Year 9 indicate attainment well above the national average. GCSE results in 2004 were well above the national average and the trend over the last three years has been upward.
95. Standards seen were well above the standards set out in the National Curriculum in Year 9. This represents very good achievement during students' first three years in school. Most students have a good use and understanding of subject specific vocabulary. Many have developed considerable skills of analysis and can interpret data, and diagrams to make appropriate judgements. For example, they use and accurately analyse information from photographs to illustrate how the docklands area in London has been redeveloped and understand the reasons for this. By the end of Year 11, the skills learned in Year 9 have developed in preparation for GCSE and standards are well above average. For many students, their skills of analysis are now more sophisticated. They use these skills effectively to describe urban land use and understand reasons for the changes in land use. Most students have a good understanding of the changes that occur as a result of river erosion and are able to describe most of the processes that cause these changes. Key words are emphasised in lessons and good question-and-answer sessions in many lessons are effective in developing speaking and listening skills. The development of literacy skills for students in geography is good for students of all abilities. They are given very good opportunities for developing speaking and listening skills through good question-and-answer sessions. Most lessons also involve students in group discussion and decision making. There are good opportunities for extended writing although marking does not always identify critical areas for development in writing. Opportunities for students to analyse and interpret graphs and basic statistics are very good in Years 10 and 11, especially in the high standard of coursework produced by students. Opportunities for students to develop their ICT skills are restricted.
96. The quality of teaching is very good. Most students bring very positive attitudes to lessons and are keen to succeed. Key factors in the good and very good teaching are the planning of lessons, combined with the use of a wide range of teaching methods and very good question-and-answer sessions with students. A significant factor in the good progress made by students is the opportunity provided for them to take responsibility for their own learning and the focus on examination and syllabus criteria. Mostly, teachers use a wide range of activities, ensure that students are responsible for their own work and have clear targets. Students of all abilities are appropriately challenged. Where teaching is not quite so good, the behaviour of a significant minority of students causes disruption and is not appropriately managed. Marking of work provides very good information to help students improve and relates closely to national curriculum or GCSE levels. Monitoring of students' progress is very good and challenging targets are being set. Fieldwork is being used very effectively in most year groups to generate interest, increase relevance and to improve learning.

97. Leadership of the department is very good. There is a clear focus on achievement and opportunities for sharing good practice. Effective monitoring of teaching and learning is developing. Day-to-day management of the department is very good and a committed team of staff works very hard to maintain the good standards in the department. Schemes of work are very good working documents and are under constant review. They link clearly with departmental assessment procedures and identify extension work for the higher-attaining students. The department development plan identifies clear and appropriate areas for improvement, but lacks some detail and does not identify a time frame. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good; there are now very good opportunities for independent learning and extension activities for higher-achieving students are now included in the planning of all lessons; and marking to inform the progress of all students is now very good.

### History

Provision in history is good.

|                                    | Year 9                  | Year 11            |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Standards                          | Well above expectations | Well above average |
| Achievement                        | Very good               | Very good          |
| Teaching and learning              | Very good               | Good               |
| Leadership                         | Very good               |                    |
| Management                         | Good                    |                    |
| Progress since the last inspection | Good                    |                    |

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching and students' diligence result in high attainment
- The marking and assessment of students' work is very good, so they know what they must do to improve
- All students achieve well because teachers know them and match work to their needs
- Students have insufficient opportunity to practise ICT skills in their learning
- The restive behaviour of a minority of students adversely affects the learning of others

### Commentary

98. In 2004, teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were very high compared with the nationally reported levels. GCSE examination results were well above the national average in 2004, with a high proportion achieving the highest grades A and A\*.
99. Students' attainment when they join the school is above average. The standards attained by current Year 9 students are well above national expectations. Their work shows a good grasp of the relative importance of events and individuals and a developing understanding that these can be interpreted differently. All Year 9 students can use and evaluate sources in terms of reliability and usefulness to provide supporting evidence for their inferences. The small number of students with particular learning needs achieve well as teachers are aware of their requirements and provide very good support. Year 7 students make very good progress during their first term in developing subject skills. Standards in Year 11 are well above expectations at this stage of the course. In well-structured written work, students identify links between aspects of different topics or periods and analyse reasons for, and results of, different events and changes. They can explain how and why these have been interpreted differently. Higher-attaining students use sources more critically and reach conclusions supported with evidence.
100. The teaching and learning observed were very good, overall. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding of course requirements. Learning is very good as

students work hard and make good use of the regular homework that fosters a broader and deeper understanding of change. In the best lessons, teachers' enthusiasm ensured that students were interested, attentive and able to sustain their concentration. They provided rich descriptions relating one period or event to another and providing interesting details about important figures and events. In weaker lessons, students were not engaged, teachers dominated discussion and too little was expected of them. Emotive topics were treated with balance and sensitivity, for example, when Year 11 students reviewed the rise of National Socialism in Germany. Students have the skills and opportunities necessary for both independent and collaborative learning. Visits, for example to Dover Castle and The Imperial War Museum, build students' interest and further enrich learning. The subject makes a very good contribution to their social, moral and cultural development. Opportunities to promote citizenship are frequent and identified in the planning. Assessment is very good. Students' work is marked regularly, promptly and to a high standard. The monitoring of their progress is very well developed. Students know what they must do to improve.

101. Leadership and management are good. Schemes of work are appropriately detailed and the National Strategy for Years 7 to 9 is in place. Insufficient opportunities are planned for students to practise ICT skills in their learning. Newly-qualified teachers and those in training are supported very well. Clear priorities have been identified and included in the improvement plan. A very competent and enthusiastic team of specialists has been established. Teachers share the limited specialist accommodation available. Standards have risen since the last inspection, the work of the department is evaluated regularly and the assessment and monitoring of students learning are very much improved.

### Religious education

Provision in religious education is good.

|                                    | Year 9             | Year 11            |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Standards                          | Above expectations | Well above average |
| Achievements                       | Good               | Good               |
| Teaching and Learning              | Good               | Good               |
| Leadership                         | Good               |                    |
| Management                         | Good               |                    |
| Progress since the last inspection | Good               |                    |

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good leadership and management have helped to overcome the lack of specialist teachers effectively
- GCSE short course results were above the national average in 2004
- Students achieve well because of good planning and teaching
- Off-task disruption affects students' learning in a small number of lessons

### Commentary

102. There were no teacher assessments of students' achievement at the end of Year 9 in 2004. The results in the GCSE short course were above the national average with over 75 per cent of students gaining A\*-C grades and every student in the year group following the course.
103. Standards of students on entry to Year 7 are in line with the expectations of the locally agreed syllabus. In the present Year 9, standards seen are above average. Most students have a good knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and practices of the major world faiths. This represents good achievement. All students in the present Year 11 take the

GCSE short course and have a very good knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and teachings, particularly in relation to the Christian and Islamic faiths. Their standards are well above average, as was seen in their extended written work on war, crime and punishment and embryology. Their achievement overall is good given their level of entry to the course.

104. Very thorough planning of lessons enables students to learn well. Teachers explain ideas well and ask searching questions about beliefs and moral issues. In the most effective lessons observed, students were encouraged to talk about and explain what they thought, as well as writing about their ideas. They explained clearly why they held particular views and gave clear examples to support their ideas. In a Year 8 lesson on the teachings of Gandhi, groups of students interpreted the Hindu preacher's sayings with considerable maturity. This led to lively debate about why his views were relevant to people living in the modern world. Students' religious vocabulary is developed effectively through activities, such as designing a multi-denominational church and debating the rights and wrongs of banning religious symbols in schools. Students with special educational needs achieve well because their needs are well known and teachers give them good support. Written tasks are well marked and students are shown how they can improve their work well. This clearly helps their progress. The majority of students have a satisfactory understanding of their standards and set their own targets well. However, the work is not always interesting enough for some students. A small number disrupted learning by off-task chatting in a few of the observed lessons. As a result, their learning was much less focused. This behaviour was sometimes the result of the non-specialist teachers lacking detailed knowledge of how to adapt the work sufficiently to engage those who are less interested in the topic.
105. The department development plan is thorough and identifies priorities well. Although there are no trained specialist teachers of the subject, members of the team are working very hard to provide a quality programme for all students, who respond well and clearly enjoy their lessons. The monitoring of teaching and learning is thorough, with regular observations and exercise book checks. Schemes of work for Years 7 to 11 are good and meet the requirements of the Surrey Agreed Syllabus. However, one lesson per week is below the recommended time for the subject. Good opportunities to develop students' spiritual, moral, cultural and social skills are built well into the curriculum. All students in Years 10 and 11 follow the GCSE short course programme. This is a marked improvement from the situation at the time of the last inspection, when provision was unsatisfactory as there was no course for Years 10 and 11.

## TECHNOLOGY

### Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is good.

|                       | Year 9             | Year 11       |
|-----------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Standards             | Above expectations | Above average |
| Achievement           | Good               | Good          |
| Teaching and learning | Good               | Good          |

|                                    |              |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
| Leadership                         | Satisfactory |
| Management                         | Good         |
| Progress since the last inspection | Satisfactory |

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The department benefits from a core of very capable teachers who have a secure knowledge of their subject

- The present arrangements for the leadership of the department are beginning to lead to unresolved issues and a lack of strategic vision
- The standard of students' work in designing and making is of a high order. Some older students' work is innovative
- Some teaching strategies in weaker lessons are not aimed consistently enough to sustain students' interest throughout the lesson, particularly for higher-attaining students

### **Commentary**

106. Teacher assessments in Year 9, in 2004, were well above those reported nationally with girls' achievement higher than that of boys, particularly at the highest level. In 2004, GCSE results at A\* to C grades were well above national average as are the proportion of students achieving a pass. All of the technology subjects performed better than nationally, with the exception of textiles. Results are best in electronics and food where a significant number of students achieved the highest grades. Despite technology being a compulsory core option for GCSE, a significant number of students failed to sit a technology examination in 2004 due to staffing difficulties. These staffing difficulties have also led to a lack of continuity in the courses offered at GCSE over the last three years and uptake at A-level is limited to a very small number of students in electronics.
107. Standards on entry to the school are above those expected nationally and they remain so at the end of Year 9. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is broad and balanced and meets the statutory requirements although there is less curriculum time given to design and technology in Years 7 and 8 than in Year 9. This is impacting adversely on the depth of students' subject knowledge. For instance, in a Year 9 electronics lesson, students were unable to identify basic components in their project work and pneumatics, in which the department has done some exemplary work, is not taught on a regular basis. Standards in designing and graphical work are above average, but consolidation of learning in these important communication skills is beginning to be affected for the same reasons.
108. The standard of work seen in Years 10 and 11 is above average and has risen consistently over the last three years. Achievement by the end of Year 11 is good and students have a high level of skill in presenting written and graphical work, leading to high quality coursework. Students' skills in making are also well developed and teachers provide expert guidance in order to ensure success, leading to well-made final products. Generally work is matched to the needs of individuals, but in some lessons, higher-attaining students were given menial extension tasks rather than more challenging assignments.
109. Teaching and learning are good across all year groups. Where teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject and the lesson is taught with pace and enthusiasm, this results in good learning. In the best examples seen, the lessons were well planned and the students undertook a variety of activities which captivated and motivated them. In a few lessons, the pace was slower and the subject content failed to sustain interest and motivation and led to low-level disruptive behaviour. This was particularly noticeable for boys who were given extended writing tasks in double lessons. In Years 10 and 11, students have the benefit of a core of very knowledgeable and experienced teachers. Students are very co-operative and they show good levels of concentration, particularly when involved in practical work. The level of independent learning is of a high order. Students' ICT skills are also well developed and this contributes to good project work. ICT is used effectively throughout the technology curriculum but the best examples of the use of computer-aided design and manufacture are limited to the workshop-based activities.
110. The management of the department is good due to the competent and capable staff who hold positions of responsibility. Schemes of work and other essential policies are in place and the workshops are well organised and resourced. Staff understand and recognise their priorities in order to meet the needs of the students. School policies are consistently



implemented. The management of students' assessment data for target setting is a strength of the department, although the marking of students' work is not consistent. Many of the health and safety issues have been addressed since the previous inspection, but the storage of materials is unsatisfactory and portable appliances are not tested regularly. Greater vocational choice has been introduced into the technology curriculum through collaborative arrangements with the local college of further education. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. The difficulty in recruiting a suitably experienced head of faculty is resulting in a lack of strategic vision for this important department within a specialist technology college and the present management structure does not offer a clear definition of overall responsibility. Consequently, some teachers within the department have to operate more independently than others and parents have identified an uncertainty about who they should speak to about any concerns they may have.

### **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

Drama is taught as a discrete subject in Years 10 and 11 and was sampled during the inspection. GCSE results for drama in 2004 were excellent with almost every student attaining grades A\*-C. Results are always consistently well above the national average. This high standard was reflected in the work seen in a current Year 10 class. Their strong motivation and willingness to think helped them make very good progress in improvising dramatic asides to the plays they were studying.

The teaching seen was good, with some very good features. Lessons were well planned. Teachers successfully demonstrated skills with the expectation that students would emulate and develop specific drama techniques. Students enjoy the subject, respond quickly to instructions and work co-operatively. Drama club is very popular and the department makes a very successful impact on the creative life of the school with its large-scale productions.

## Art and design

Provision in art and design is very good.

|                       | Year 9                  | Year 11            |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|
| Standards             | Well above expectations | Well above average |
| Achievement           | Good                    | Very good          |
| Teaching and learning | Good                    | Very good          |

  

|                                    |           |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
| Leadership                         | Very good |
| Management                         | Good      |
| Progress since the last inspection | Very good |

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The limited curriculum time and cramped accommodation restrict the scope of curriculum and the range of teaching and learning styles
- Data is used very effectively by teachers to plan work and track students' progress
- Leadership is very good leadership, with very high expectations and excellent teamwork
- Much of the teaching is either very good or excellent

### Commentary

111. The 2004 Year 9 teacher assessments showed standards to be well above those reported nationally. The GCSE results in 2004 were well above the national average, with students performing significantly better than in their other subjects. Four times the national average gained the highest A\* grade. Fewer boys than girls opt to take the subject, as is the case nationally.
112. Students make very good progress in Year 7, responding enthusiastically to the good teaching and opportunities to learn new skills and work in different media. They demonstrate increasingly more advanced drawing skills and their research and written responses demonstrate very high levels of literacy. By Year 8, most have very good drawing and annotations in their sketchbooks and portfolios. However, the 50-minute lesson and cramped accommodation place significant restrictions on what students can do and achieve. It leads to a preponderance of teacher direction, with few opportunities for students to learn by questioning and making independent decisions. As they get older, many find this increasingly frustrating. Some students in Year 9 do not fulfil their potential or continue to improve at the same rate as they did in previous years.
113. The 50-minute periods also operate in Years 10 and 11. The depth of practical work that can be done in that time is limited and, although results are very high, there are nevertheless insufficient opportunities for students to express ideas in very personal ways. Most, therefore, attend the after-school workshops that teachers provide. Here they can experiment and be more creative, mix or combine materials and processes and there is space to make large-scale work. Students also benefit from one-to-one attention and, on occasions, feedback from other specialist teachers. Students are motivated, have very good attitudes and are keen to do well so they co-operate and make the best of the unsatisfactory accommodation and restrictions posed by the timetable.
114. In all years, the use of digital media is at a very early stage of development. Computers are used very well for research and word processing, but restricted mostly to homework tasks, where students critically evaluate work by different artists and designers.
115. Teachers are all strong subject specialists. Lessons are highly organised and tightly planned and the pace of learning brisk and purposeful. Homework tasks are challenging and marking is detailed, giving praise for students' efforts. Teachers assess and monitor

progress very closely and students use the information constructively to set targets for improvement.

116. Teachers' commitment to the students, their very high expectations and excellent teamwork are helping to offset the limitations of the timetable and accommodation. The leadership is characterised by ambition, a clear vision for the subject and potential improvements that are underpinned by perceptive plans and actions designed to raise standards further. The current priorities, notably to refine the curriculum and to find ways of extending the use of computers for image manipulation are gradually being implemented.

### Music

Provision in music is good.

|                                    | Year 9                    | Year 11       |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| Standards                          | In line with expectations | Above average |
| Achievement                        | Good                      | Very good     |
| Teaching and learning              | Good                      | Very good     |
| Leadership                         | Very good                 |               |
| Management                         | Very good                 |               |
| Progress since the last inspection | Good                      |               |

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are well above the national average
- The wide range of extra-curricular activity is of a high quality
- Poor accommodation impacts adversely on teaching and learning
- Resources are inadequate, particularly in ICT
- Provision and take-up of instrumental teaching are excellent

### Commentary

117. The 2004 teacher assessments at the end of Year 9 were above those reported nationally. The 2004 GCSE results were well above average with almost all students gaining an A\*-C grade.
118. Students enter the school with standards in line with national expectations. Throughout Years 7 to 9, students are able to use musical language and understand simple notation. In Year 8, simple chords are used in keyboard performances, and by Year 9, many improvise in a suitable style to accompany reggae melodies. However, there are insufficient keyboard instruments for students to work individually in order to develop their performing skills. There is no ICT provision for students in Years 7 to 9 to support the development of composing skills. At GCSE level, students perform at a high level and read musical notation fluently, enabling the composition of coherent, structured melodies. They use technical language with understanding and relate it to the music they hear. There is little access to ICT to support the composing requirements of the GCSE examination. All groups of students in Years 7 to 9 achieve well because all tasks include a variety of activities for different levels of attainment. GCSE students achieve very well because of very good teaching and well-developed learning skills. Support is provided for those who have special needs, while providing a wide range of opportunities for the more able to progress at a faster pace. The highest achieving musicians are offered a wealth of opportunity to develop further within extra-curricular activities.
119. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are able practical musicians, providing good role models for their students. Well-planned lessons both challenge and reinforce what is already known. Relationships are good, resulting in a calm atmosphere that supports learning. Well-established classroom routines ensure that students remain focused in

practical lessons. Very good teaching at GCSE level makes difficult tasks fun, enabling all students to progress at a fast pace. However, the main teaching room has a poor acoustic that often hampers good class management. Schemes of work for Years 7 to 9 are linked closely to the National Curriculum levels and focus on music that will engage students' interest. A wide variety of world music topics are incorporated, including significant emphasis on the social and cultural background of these musical styles. Homework tasks are an integral part of the programmes of study. Students work well together and support each other in their learning, but the lack of appropriate practice space for small groups during class lessons restricts the opportunities for students to fully develop independent learning and ensemble skills. Assessment is very good, because individual targets are set to help students understand how they can improve their work. Students know their National Curriculum levels or GCSE target grades and in addition can compare their attainment with national averages. All aspects of the subject are regularly assessed and the data used to focus on raising future standards. Students' opinions are sought to ensure the subject is consistently well delivered.

120. Teachers work well together as a team in the department, supporting each other and sharing good practice. All departmental materials and resources are well organised and displayed, creating a positive atmosphere for learning. The large team of instrumental teachers is well managed, both supporting the work of the department and contributing significantly to the high standards that are achieved. A very large number of students have instrumental lessons that take place in purpose-built accommodation.
121. The ensembles and choirs provide extra opportunity and challenge for the school's many talented musicians. The teachers have high expectations and insist on technical accuracy and a high level of musicianship and as a result excellent standards of performance are achieved.
122. The issue of accommodation, highlighted in the previous report has still not been adequately dealt with. This causes unnecessary stress for the teachers in the department who have to teach in a room where they cannot make themselves heard adequately and impacts adversely on teaching and learning throughout the school. Inadequate ICT provision impacts on the delivery of both the National Curriculum and the development of composition skills at GCSE level. Despite this, standards have successfully been maintained and the take-up for the subject at examination level has been increased.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is very good.

|                       | Year 9             | Year 11            |
|-----------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Standards             | Above expectations | Well above average |
| Achievements          | Good               | Very good          |
| Teaching and Learning | Very good          | Very good          |

|                                    |           |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
| Leadership                         | Good      |
| Management                         | Very good |
| Progress since the last inspection | Good      |

### Main strengths

- Students learn very well because of the very good teaching and planning of work
- Highly committed teachers provide a very good and well attended extra-curricular programme
- Results in GCSE are consistently well above national averages
- Most students are very focused and thoroughly enjoy their lessons

- The school's achievements in competitive sports are very good

### **Commentary**

123. Students' standards at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were above those reported nationally. GCSE results in 2004 were significantly above national average.
124. On entry, Year 7 students have skills, knowledge and understanding expected nationally in the subject. Standards of Year 9 students are above average. They therefore achieve well. However, their achievement and standards in football and rugby have been adversely affected by the lack of outdoor playing fields. Year 11 students, including those taking GCSE, perform above the expectations for their age in a wide variety of sports. They achieve very well, given the problem of not having playing fields. Their knowledge, skills and understanding of performance are well above average.
125. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers use their expert subject knowledge very well to plan appropriate work. They build well on students' previous learning. In the most effective lessons, students are set very well-designed tasks and the pace of the work is consistently high. Students are encouraged to plan their own tactics and they analyse performances very well. They organise warm-up with considerable energy and skill and have very good knowledge of the reasons for such work. Expert demonstrations by both teachers and students show what high quality performance is. The exceptional demonstration work seen in trampolining, where internationals performed bounce routines and coached their classmates, resulted in good quality work by many beginners in Year 11. In nearly every lesson, the enthusiasm of the teacher for their activities was infectious and students put considerable effort into their work as a result. The teacher's energy and enthusiasm for basketball in an excellent Year 9 lesson, accompanied by expert teaching, led students to work exceptionally well, significantly improving their defensive skills. Very good support for students who have special educational needs enables them to take a full part in lessons. The additional planning between the teacher and the teaching assistant in a Year 7 lesson was particularly strong and led to the supported students achieving well above expectation. The standards in GCSE theory work are well above average and the quality of personal exercise plans sometimes exceptional. All students set personal targets and they analyse their progress well. They know the level of their performance against National Curriculum criteria, but are less aware of the specific steps to improve to the next level. The department is aware that this requires development.
126. Leadership is good. The highly committed team of teachers generate immense interest in the subject and more students are now taking the GCSE option. GCSE results have been well above average for the last six years because of the very good teaching of sports' theory. The outdoor education course in Years 8 and 9 and the Junior Sports' Leader Award (JSLA) in Year 11 are good developments, since the last inspection. Management is very good, including effective monitoring of teaching and learning. Day-to-day activities of the department are managed well, particularly the very good extra-curricular programme. Activities are numerous, attendance is above average and the department holds a Sportsmark award. Students are very successful in a variety of competitive sports, at local and county level. Many talented students are very well supported and several have achieved international status. Parents are very supportive of the sports' activities, attending many matches.

### **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

A small proportion of students benefits from a link course with the adjacent college of further education, Brooklands College. This enables them to study art and design, motor vehicle, engineering or catering skills. These courses are recently introduced and students will not take examinations until summer 2005. None of these lessons could be observed in the inspection due to timetabling arrangements and an applied science GCSE course in

Year 11 offered in the school could only be sampled. The GNVQ ICT course is reported on within the ICT area. The limited range of courses offered is aimed at lower-attaining students, and the area is underdeveloped for the wider group of students. The responsibilities for vocational education are spread widely and the leadership of vocational education has not been empowered to bring about whole- school changes to the curriculum for students aged 14 to 19.

The GCSE business studies course is popular with students and results which are regularly above national averages. This course was not inspected.

An applied science lesson was sampled during the inspection and found to have very good teaching. Students did very well in the practical work of fault finding electrical circuits. The teaching linked the work well to experiences in car mechanics. Coursework has been demanding in the time available and the department is considering stopping this science course.

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

Students follow a mixed programme of personal, social and health education and citizenship during citizenship modules in Year 7 and social education periods in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11 citizenship is taught primarily through a GCSE short course in society and religion.

## Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is satisfactory.

|                       | Year 9             | Year 11       |
|-----------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Standards             | Above expectations | Above average |
| Achievement           | Good               | Satisfactory  |
| Teaching and learning | Good               | Satisfactory  |

  

|                                    |                |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Leadership                         | Satisfactory   |
| Management                         | Satisfactory   |
| Progress since the last inspection | Not applicable |

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' moral and social qualities are developed well
- Very good lesson plans support teaching and learning in Years 7 to 9
- Limited curriculum time restricts students' experiences of citizenship, especially in Years 10 and 11
- Assessment and recording systems are not yet secure enough to measure students' achievements

### Commentary

127. Statutory teacher assessments for Year 9 students in 2004 were not undertaken. No students follow a GCSE course in citizenship.
128. By the end of Year 9, students have acquired a clear understanding of moral and social issues and have supported the work of the increasingly effective school council. Oral contributions in lessons are above average, with girls in particular, very willing and able to speak spontaneously and convincingly on topics such as friendships and bullying. They define key words precisely and explain difficult concepts accurately in their own words. All students have a mature appreciation of gender issues. Their rejection of traditional stereotypes enables them to gain a balanced view of roles and responsibilities. Their work on disability reflects well-developed capacities for empathy and argumentation. By the end of Year 11, students have encountered many aspects of citizenship as their course requires them to investigate a wide range of topics, such as crime and punishment and medical issues, from ethical, social and religious perspectives. The work of higher-attaining students, in particular, combines very good analysis with the ability to write persuasive essays to express a personal viewpoint. Students design good leaflets to inform and advise on IVF treatment. The limited time allocation does not create the conditions or opportunities for lively discussion. Progress in lessons is satisfactory, reduced by the lack of motivation of some students. Provision in Years 7 to 9 is enhanced by assessed contributions from other subjects. The curriculum ensures good development of students' moral and social qualities but there is limited scope for exploring health and work-related topics.
129. Experienced teachers achieve a consistent quality of learning across the year groups. In Years 7 to 9, there is a good mix of activities and resources to engage students' attention. The three-part lesson structure, with the exception of the plenary, is used well to direct their learning. In the best lessons, teachers make clever use of seating plans to group and pair students to boost discussion. Their responses are valued, interpreted and explored to extend understanding. Independence is encouraged as students can influence their learning, for example by choosing to answer in the form of paragraphs, spider diagrams, poems or role-plays. At times, lesson plans are followed too rigidly which impacts on spontaneity and wider discussion. Although homework is not routinely set, written work is carefully organised by teachers to ensure continuity. The assessment systems, which are

being developed for Years 7 to 9, are over-reliant on student self-assessment and do not take sufficient account of the gains expected over these years. Students' work in Years 10 and 11 is efficiently monitored.

130. Leadership has made a good analysis of citizenship across the school and has developed very clear lesson plans to guide the work of colleagues. Restricted time constrains further development and results in some imbalances in the curriculum. Citizenship was not previously inspected.

### SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, eight 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 2004.

#### *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                   | 15             | 100                  | 78.3    | 100                  | 21.6    | 56.7                | 28.5    |
| Biology               | 25             | 88                   | 63.5    | 32                   | 10.4    | 33.2                | 19.8    |
| Business studies      | 30             | 97                   | 75.3    | 60                   | 15.4    | 44.3                | 25.7    |
| Chemistry             | 14             | 100                  | 70.3    | 57                   | 13.2    | 44.3                | 23.0    |
| Communication studies | 14             | 100                  | 87.2    | 86                   | 24.9    | 50.0                | 32.8    |
| Critical thinking     | 23             | 100                  | 73.6    | 78                   | 16.9    | 52.2                | 25.5    |
| Drama                 | 11             | 100                  | 86.6    | 0                    | 19.8    | 36.4                | 30.9    |
| Design technology     | 4              | 100                  | 72.6    | 25                   | 13.9    | 42.50               | 24.3    |
| English               | 21             | 90                   | 85.3    | 38                   | 16.1    | 40.0                | 29.0    |
| French                | 6              | 100                  | 79.8    | 0                    | 19.4    | 31.7                | 28.2    |
| Geography             | 34             | 97                   | 75.5    | 47                   | 20.4    | 42.6                | 27.0    |
| History               | 31             | 100                  | 82.2    | 71                   | 20.8    | 49.4                | 29.2    |
| Information studies   | 45             | 100                  | 66.6    | 33                   | 8.8     | 40.2                | 20.6    |
| Mathematics           | 31             | 71                   | 59.9    | 35                   | 14.1    | 31.3                | 20.5    |
| Media studies         | 13             | 100                  | 87.2    | 77                   | 24.9    | 47.7                | 32.8    |
| Music                 | 2              | 100                  | 79.8    | 50                   | 16.9    | 40.0                | 27.5    |
| Physics               | 22             | 100                  | 66.4    | 50                   | 14.8    | 45.5                | 22.4    |
| Psychology            | 34             | 94                   | 67.8    | 44                   | 15.1    | 39.7                | 23.2    |
| Physical education    | 13             | 92                   | 72.2    | 8                    | 11.8    | 33.0                | 22.8    |
| Sociology             | 14             | 93                   | 72.1    | 21                   | 19.6    | 35.0                | 25.9    |



**Level 3 GCE A level and VCE courses**

| Subject                | Number entered | % gaining grades A-E |         | % gaining grades A-B |         | Average point score |         |
|------------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------|----------------------|---------|---------------------|---------|
|                        |                | School               | England | School               | England | School              | England |
| Art and design         | 4              | 100                  | 98.3    | 100                  | 50.2    | 120.0               | 87.1    |
| Biology                | 14             | 93                   | 96.6    | 50                   | 40.0    | 84.3                | 79.3    |
| Business studies       | 20             | 100                  | 98.9    | 65                   | 39.4    | 99.0                | 81.8    |
| Chemistry              | 12             | 100                  | 97.7    | 67                   | 50.0    | 101.7               | 85.7    |
| Communication studies  | 12             | 100                  | 99.2    | 42                   | 40.4    | 81.7                | 83.5    |
| English                | 20             | 100                  | 99.2    | 50                   | 36.4    | 85.0                | 81.1    |
| French                 | 5              | 100                  | 99.0    | 60                   | 53.1    | 96.0                | 88.9    |
| Geography              | 14             | 100                  | 98.8    | 57                   | 46.4    | 91.4                | 85.2    |
| German                 | 3              | 100                  | 98.6    | 67                   | 49.6    | 100.0               | 86.3    |
| History                | 26             | 100                  | 99.0    | 50                   | 45.6    | 87.7                | 85.1    |
| Information studies    | 33             | 85                   | 96.3    | 37                   | 25.7    | 71.5                | 71.1    |
| Leisure and recreation | 10             | 100                  | 91.3    | 56                   | 24.2    | 88.0                | 67.1    |
| Mathematics            | 19             | 95                   | 96.8    | 50                   | 56.6    | 85.3                | 89.5    |
| Modern languages       | 2              | 100                  | 97.3    | 100                  | 66.7    | 120.0               | 95.6    |
| Media studies          | 10             | 100                  | 99.2    | 60                   | 40.4    | 88.0                | 83.5    |
| Music                  | 5              | 100                  | 98.2    | 20                   | 37.1    | 72.0                | 79.5    |
| Physics                | 11             | 91                   | 96.7    | 45                   | 45.3    | 80.0                | 82.6    |
| Physical education     | 12             | 100                  | 97.8    | 42                   | 30.9    | 76.7                | 75.4    |
| Psychology             | 14             | 100                  | 97.4    | 43                   | 42.5    | 88.6                | 81.6    |
| Sociology              | 2              | 100                  | 98.5    | 100                  | 45.3    | 100.0               | 84.6    |

**ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

English and French are reported in detail. Lessons were also observed in German and communication studies. Students gave presentations in German on the topic of healthy eating. The quality of teaching was very good and tasks were well matched to students' learning needs. The teacher's skilful use of the target language contributed significantly to the standards achieved. One lesson of communication studies was observed in which students discussed with interest the issue of change brought about in society as a result of new technology. Well-informed teaching stimulated a lively discussion amongst the students.

## English

Provision in English literature is good.

|                                    | Year 13       |
|------------------------------------|---------------|
| Standards                          | Above average |
| Achievement                        | Good          |
| Teaching and learning              | Good          |
| Leadership                         | Good          |
| Management                         | Good          |
| Progress since the last inspection | Good          |

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well and English literature results are above average
- Teaching is consistently good and assessment very well used
- Planning for the curriculum and lessons is thorough and tasks suitably varied
- Students have positive attitudes to their work and relationships are very good
- Teachers show great commitment to their students' success
- Limited study space and limited access to the learning and resources centre makes independent study more difficult for students

### Commentary

131. Results in English literature A-level in 2004 were in line with the national average. There is a variation in size of groups from year to year, but generally girls outnumber boys; they also outperformed them in 2004. Very few students leave the course after AS level though many retake modules to raise their grades.
132. Students start their advanced studies with average or slightly above average attainment after GCSE. They are very well motivated to do well and this is an important factor in their good achievement. Their written work in literary criticism and their contributions in lessons are an indication of their interest and commitment. Higher-attaining students produce sophisticated writing with content flavoured by their wider reading. However, many students find the amount of reading and the depth of analysis required at advanced level very challenging after GCSE. Year 12 students, working in pairs on the poetry of Thomas Hardy, shared ideas and exceeded expectations with higher-attaining and older students taking an active lead. Students in Year 13, recently introduced to the poetry of Keats, found his work difficult to understand, and struggled with both his language and concepts.
133. The quality of teaching and learning is good. Texts are chosen to be intellectually demanding. Skilful and enthusiastic teaching links the literature studied well to contemporary and spiritual issues and, in its relevance and interest, promotes good personal development in the students. In most lessons, teachers make use of small group and pair work which requires all students to participate actively in reading, discussion and note taking before feeding back their ideas to the class. Teachers have a clear idea of students' prior attainment, of current performance and of appropriate targets. They make very good use of this information to help students make progress.
134. Leadership is good and the courses offered managed well. Improvement since the last inspection has been good as numbers have increased. Sixth-form study space in the school is inadequate and access to the learning and resources centre is restricted by its being used as a teaching room, making independent study more difficult for students.

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

135. Standards of literacy are very good across the curriculum. Students write a range of detailed accounts at length. There are many opportunities for discussion, debate and collaborative group work. A particular strength is the maturity and flair students display in speaking and listening.

## French

Provision in French is satisfactory.

|                                    | Year 13       |
|------------------------------------|---------------|
| Standards                          | Below average |
| Achievement                        | Satisfactory  |
| Teaching and learning              | Good          |
| Leadership                         | Good          |
| Management                         | Good          |
| Progress since the last inspection | Good          |

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Relatively small numbers of students take A-level French considering the school's well above average results at GCSE
- Teachers speak French all the time and have high expectations of students' comprehension skills
- Students in Year 13 do not have sufficiently consistent opportunities to develop and extend their speaking skills
- Good collaboration with the local further education college makes best use of resources

### Commentary

136. Over the last few years the number of students taking A-level French has been relatively low. Results have varied from year to year, but taken as whole they match national averages. Students have achieved grades which are very similar to those predicted for them from their GCSE results.
137. Standards seen in the current Year 13 are somewhat below average. Students are working on appropriate topics such as the environment and the problem of homelessness, and in these contexts they are dealing with some demanding vocabulary. However, although they understand this vocabulary and can follow the teachers' fluent French, they find it hard to enter into a discussion themselves using this material, or to sustain a conversation. In written work, students are writing at length and bringing in a good variety of vocabulary. However, there are too many basic errors in grammar, such as in verb endings and adjective agreements. Students are on course to achieve examination results which match those predicted by their previous GCSE results. Achievement is therefore satisfactory. In Year 12, standards are average. In a lesson on the pluperfect tense, students showed a good knowledge of verbs in other tenses and were beginning to use French to talk about how they were formed and when they would use them.
138. There has been some lack of continuity in teaching on the A-level course, but that situation has now been resolved. The overall quality of teaching and learning is now good. Teachers speak French all the time and have high expectations of students' comprehension skills. The various aspects of the course are covered well and this is reflected in the amount of work in students' files. Marking is detailed and helpful, and is closely related to the criteria set by the examination board. There is not, however, a sufficiently consistent approach to providing planned opportunities for extended speaking or to allowing students the time they need to think through and develop their answers to questions.
139. The subject leader has a clear understanding of the need to improve recruitment onto the A-level French course and this is reflected in plans to develop the main school curriculum and encourage a greater number of students to specialise in languages. Collaboration with Brooklands College, whereby their Year 13 students join classes at Heathside, is good, thus making best use of teaching resources. The course is managed well with clear divisions of

responsibility, good use of assessment and careful monitoring of students' progress. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is satisfactory.

|                                    |              |
|------------------------------------|--------------|
|                                    | Year 13      |
| Standards                          | Average      |
| Achievement                        | Satisfactory |
| Teaching and learning              | Good         |
| Leadership                         | Satisfactory |
| Management                         | Satisfactory |
| Progress since the last inspection | Satisfactory |

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are keen to learn and they work hard
- The highest achievers do well and benefit from the flexible timetabling arrangements
- Those entered for A-level mathematics achieve results that are above average
- Retaining students between AS and A-level has been a recognised issue in the subject
- Students have limited opportunity to develop mathematical thinking or study skills

### Commentary

140. Mathematics results at A-level were above average in 2004, with good proportions achieving the highest grades A and B. In the same year, however, the AS results were disappointing and the proportion of students continuing through to A-level was understandably a concern to the school. Female students do well, although relatively small numbers follow A-level mathematics courses.
141. A strength is that students are keen and concentrate well in lessons. They conscientiously tackle the pure mathematics, statistics and mechanics modules, which are flexibly available to students in Years 12 and 13. Most students start courses having achieved above average previous results. However, the transition between GCSE and post-16 mathematics is disrupted by the arrangements in Year 11 for those who take GCSE early, restricting their rates of progress. Although overall standards are satisfactory, there are varied levels of confidence and skills amongst Year 12 students. The quality of students' written work matches this, some being careful and precise, while other work is less well presented. Generally, however, students accurately manipulate algebra and recall standard procedures, for example when they carefully divided out algebraic expressions or analysed quadratic equations and their associated graphs. Relative weaknesses include the abilities of students to extend ideas beyond the routine methods they have been taught or to appreciate the beauty of the subject.
142. Teaching is enthusiastic and accurate, reflecting the teachers' good knowledge of mathematics. It involves effective instruction and practise, and good relations between staff and students. A strength in the lessons seen was the opportunity for students to discuss mathematics by exploring methods in pairs and to explain solutions to their peers at the board. In some good lessons, preparation for module assessments was emphasised and students were knowledgeably taught about how marks might be gained or lost in examinations. The greater involvement of students in self-assessment, as part of an improved tracking of progress, is a good current development. However, there is insufficient demand for students to make use of resources beyond the textbooks or to read around the subject. As a result, they tend to be less experienced in looking for alternative, neater methods, or in developing their own study skills. A good regular enrichment is the opportunity for students to compete in national mathematics contests.

143. A strength related to leadership is the popularity of mathematics seen in the large and increasing numbers that start in Year 12, whilst a weakness is the retention rate linked to the disappointing AS results. There is satisfactory co-ordination of the teaching and organisation of the modules. Given the recently revised syllabus, the departmental development of schemes, resources and assessment are appropriate priorities. The use of ICT in A-level teaching and learning has importantly been identified as an area for improvement. Since the previous inspection, the numbers of students and success rates have increased as might be expected in the growing sixth form and overall improvement has been satisfactory.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

144. In other subjects, the sixth-form students have sufficient mathematical skills to support their work. This was well illustrated in graph plotting for a biology enzymes experiment, in examples of geography field study work and in skills with indices used by business education students.

### **SCIENCE**

The focus was on biology, but one lesson of chemistry and another in physics were observed.

In a well-structured Year 12 chemistry lesson, students made good progress. Teachers' planned the lesson's activities very well to include practical and information research. Students' very good attitudes contributed to their success.

A Year 13 physics lesson was depleted because of examinations. Students remaining worked well showing independence in revising learning on waves in our universe. Teaching was good and the standards reached by the class were well above average.

### **Biology**

Provision in biology is very good.

|                                    |           |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
| Standards                          | Average   |
| Achievement                        | Good      |
| Teaching and learning              | Very good |
| Leadership                         | Very good |
| Management                         | Very good |
| Progress since the last inspection | Good      |

### **Main strengths**

- Students have positive attitudes and achieve well above average standards
- Very good leadership and induction of teachers new to A-level lead to very good teaching and learning
- Very good use of assessment aids learning and students' understanding of coursework

### **Commentary**

145. In 2004, results were well above average as they were in the previous two years. The number of boys and girls is roughly equal and both attain results well above their respective national averages at both AS and A2 level.

146. The standards seen in the school are not quite as high as the results would suggest because small samples are subject to fluctuation and a significant number of students are allowed on the course with less than the usual entry requirement of a B grade GCSE to an A-level course. Thus current standards are nearer to the A-level average. However, the strength of teaching results in a higher standard of investigatory coursework, with well

written plans and very good use of numeracy, not only in the statistical work but also in reciprocal plots of enzyme experiments, complete with indicators of the error range and the line of best fit. National data used by the school indicate that most students perform in line with their attainment on entry, but the overall judgement of good achievement takes into account the higher standards shown in extended writing, in mathematics and in investigation.

147. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have a very good range of expertise and knowledge and understanding of the subject. During inspection week, lessons were disrupted by the January modular examinations. However, in the very consistent and well-planned teaching, Year 12 students were given a very clear understanding of the demands of coursework and the criteria used by examiners. Very good use was made of the chief examiners report to refine students' judgement and increase their achievement in writing up plans and in self-assessment of their ability to carry out instructions with precision. Lessons were well planned and very good use made of group work to promote independence. Although Year 13 students were in the middle of examinations, they still came to lessons to receive well-planned guidance on revision and on examination technique.
148. Very good leadership in an A-level subject was shown in the degree of co-operation and teamwork. An experienced teacher and those new to A-level planned together very effectively to the benefit of the students. The students' attitudes to the subject are positive. They are very positive about the quality of teaching and support, moderately so about facilities and their one point of criticism is already being addressed by widening the variety of learning strategies in use. Links with higher education are good. Accommodation and resources are also satisfactory, being in the better laboratories and with tests provided for work at home. ICT is used well, particularly in coursework.
149. The subject has been firmly established since the previous when the A-level biology course was in its infancy. Improvement has therefore been good.

#### **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

|                                    |                    |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|
|                                    | Year 13            |
| Standards                          | Well above average |
| Achievement                        | Very good          |
| Teaching and learning              | Very good          |
| Leadership                         | Very good          |
| Management                         | Very good          |
| Progress since the last inspection | Very good          |

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

- A-level results have been well above average in the last three years because of the very good teaching
- Learning programmes have been outstandingly designed and contain individual lessons with links to the text
- Students do not gain wider insight into the subject by making visits to local commerce as part of their studies
- The course is benefiting from the excellent development of learning materials and assessment
- Cross-curricular ICT is unsatisfactory because of insufficient access and computers

#### **Commentary**



150. Overall, A-level results in 2004 were well above average. Results declined for boys to above average because of the lower than usual prior attainment of some students at the start of the course. Students gained considerably more A and B grades than students nationally.
151. Students achieve very well in this subject because of the very good teaching. Year 12 students have good achievement in developing their literacy, problem-solving and presentation skills when they build mind-maps through team-work activities, share research information and use the findings to make an electronic presentation of the functions of computer memory. Year 13 students were seen to have outstanding achievement in these areas when imaginative teaching methods created competitive lessons that engaged all students. Standards of coursework in 2004 were well above average because of the appropriate approaches and technically accurate teaching. Students created electronic ordering and stock control systems using relational databases for clients. These were presented in a highly professional report style.
152. Teaching and learning are very good overall, some teaching seen was outstanding due to the energy and fun injected into the lesson, and the excellent planning of the learning activities. The teaching frequently links what is going on in the lesson to the requirements of the examination, through very good use of interactive technologies. This enables students to realise that the learning activity has given them the necessary skills to answer examination questions. Literacy, problem-solving skills and numeracy are very well developed in the coursework and lessons. Skilful teaching, using effective learning techniques, ensures that students have opportunities to assimilate each section of the lessons. Group work very effectively combines elements of discussion, imagery and reflection using the benefits of modern technology. Students are encouraged to e-mail work to their tutors for effective feedback and advice. Students do not get sufficient first-hand experience of seeing commercial IT systems in use.
153. Leadership and management of the course are very good because they have capitalised on the full potential offered by the new technology. The course is organised very well using electronic methods. The learning programmes have been outstandingly designed and contain individual lessons with links to the text, Internet web resources and tasks. Assessment and monitoring systems are very secure, again because of the very effective use of ICT. These improvements have led to much higher standards than at the time of the last report so that improvement since the last inspection has been very good.

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

154. Students make varied use of ICT in other subjects and their skills are effective when required to use ICT. However, overall provision is unsatisfactory. Many subjects do not have sufficient access to computers. The sixth-form building has insufficient computers for independent study use. Students have to resort to home working or finding a spare computer in another lesson and this limits experience and application of ICT. Insufficient opportunities are provided for students to develop their capabilities in software, other than through using the standard office tools. This is particularly affecting mathematics, art, history, religious education and music.

### **HUMANITIES**

Geography is reported in detail but single lessons of sociology, history and psychology were observed.

In sociology, the group was small as many students were involved in examinations. However, students made good use of the opportunity provided by lively teaching and discussion to work on their independent studies.

History results were well above average in 2004 and, in the observed lesson, teaching was good. Students made good progress in understanding the fluctuating position of the Provisional Government and the Bolsheviks in 1917 Russia.

Psychology standards are above those reached nationally. Students achieve well from different starting points and results are good. In the lesson, Year 12 students learned very well because of teachers' very good planning. Swift question-and-answer sessions indicated a clear understanding of the impact of stress.

### **Geography**

Provision in geography is good.

|                                    | Year 13       |
|------------------------------------|---------------|
| Standards                          | Above average |
| Achievement                        | Good          |
| Teaching and learning              | Good          |
| Leadership                         | Good          |
| Management                         | Good          |
| Progress since the last inspection | Good          |

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards on the A-level course are above average
- Teaching is consistently good
- There is a high standard of course work and students use data very well to support their work
- Some opportunities to use ICT are being missed
- Assessment of work is good and provides clear targets for improvement

## **Commentary**

155. In 2004, A-level results were above the national average but decreased slightly compared to 2003. Several students in both years did not achieve their predicted grades.
156. Standards are above average for current A-level students and they are achieving well. All students who started the course completed it. Most students have a good understanding of topics covered in both human and physical geography and make good progress, given their levels of attainment when starting the course. They have a good knowledge of the effects of river erosion and the management of the effects of this. They also have a good understanding of the management of the effects of natural hazards. Students use a range of data very well and make good judgements using this data. Their map work and their ability to use photographic evidence are good. Their investigative skills are good, but there was limited evidence of the use of computers in lessons although there is increasing encouragement for students to use ICT for research purposes. Year 12 students are also achieving well and the standard of their investigative studies based on fieldwork is high. Studies are very well structured and presented and students use a wide range of data and some sophisticated analysis of the data to support their findings.
157. Teaching is consistently good and sometimes very good. Lessons have a clear structure and resources are used effectively. All teachers have very good subject knowledge and use this very effectively with students in well-directed question-and-answer sessions where good support is provided for students of all abilities. Students regularly take responsibility for their work and develop their investigative skills. They are attentive and work well in response to the good teaching. A very good lesson in Year 13 on the management of the consequences of an earthquake was very well organised with a wide range of activities and resources provided. Very good question-and-answer sessions and astute intervention by the teacher, as students worked in groups, ensured that very good progress was made.
158. Work is regularly marked and a good range of information is provided to help students improve their work and to set targets related to examination levels. There are good opportunities for students to practise examination questions and their progress is very effectively monitored by the department.
159. Leadership is good and the course is well organised with a good range of resources available. Day-to-day management is good, but there is no specific development plan for sixth form geography. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

No courses are offered in the school within this area.

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

No subject taught in this curriculum area is reported in depth in this inspection, but single lessons of art, media studies, drama and music were observed.

Standards in the art lesson were well above average and reflected the high standards attained at A-level in 2004. The department is characterised by very good teamwork with shared teaching and thorough tracking of students' progress.

In music, standards of performance and composing are very high as a result of good teaching, assisted by access to professional workshops and composers. In the lesson seen, students learned well by assessing others' work which was based on pitching levels of technical control over their musical interpretations.

Drama is a new subject in the sixth-form curriculum and students will take A-level for the first time later this year. Attainment at AS level was average in 2004, reflecting the students' level of attainment at the start of the course. The strengths of teaching are in planning and good quality assessment.

One media studies lesson was observed with a small group of Year 13 students whilst others were involved in examinations. Students showed discrimination in their analysis of gender issues and were guided by good teaching.

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

Leisure and recreation AVC is available in the sixth form. Results were very high in 2004 and improved on the well above average results in 2003. In the sampled lesson, the good teaching enabled students to apply ideas to planning an event for the community to be staged later in the year. Good resources have been developed, including the use of electronic materials. Good systems have been developed to monitor achievements and the work related to the requirements of the course.

### **BUSINESS**

#### **Business studies**

Provision in business studies is very good.

|                                    |               |
|------------------------------------|---------------|
|                                    | Year 13       |
| Standards                          | Above average |
| Achievement                        | Very good     |
| Teaching and learning              | Very good     |
| Leadership                         | Very good     |
| Management                         | Very good     |
| Progress since the last inspection | Good          |

#### **Main strengths**

- The very good teaching results in high attainment in both Years 12 and 13
- Students have very positive attitudes and achieve very well in relation to their starting points
- The leadership and management of the course are very good; the well-qualified teachers forming a most effective team

#### **Commentary**

160. In 2004, A-level results were well above the school and national averages with a particularly high proportion achieving the higher grades A and B. AS-level results showed similarly high attainment.
161. Year 12 students' files, including those who had no prior experience of this subject, show that they have made very good progress since September. For example, in a very good lesson on factors affecting production lines, students could identify appropriate methods, their benefits and disadvantages. All were working at or above the level expected at this stage. A similar group of students currently in Year 13 have made very good progress and are working above the level expected, as seen in a revision lesson on accounting and finance when they showed a very good understanding of technical language and business concepts as they responded to challenging questioning.
162. Teaching observed was very good so students learned most effectively. The well-qualified teachers provide demanding role models in the use of technical language. Expectations are very high. An appropriate emphasis is placed on the development of literacy skills. Both in

oral and written work, students are encouraged to make decisions, applying theory and supporting their inferences with evidence. They are both challenged and supported by the teaching. Apposite examples drawn from business and commerce reinforce understanding and with the use of topical issues provide an appropriate context for their studies, for example retailing patterns over the Christmas period. The range of activities in a Year 13 lesson provided students with opportunities to work independently and in collaboration with others. Their files show proficiency in a range of statistical methods. All have well developed information technology skills and use these frequently to access the Internet to research topics.

163. Teachers know the needs of their students well as a result of the very thorough assessment of their work and constant monitoring of their progress. This is valued, as is the support provided by teachers.
164. The curriculum is managed very well to meet examination board requirements. Detailed schemes of work are set out very clearly. Teachers work together to effect improvement; observing each other's lessons and sharing good practice. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The numbers of students have increased and standards have risen through more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching.

### **HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE**

No subjects are offered in the school in this area.

### **PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND GENERAL PROGRAMMES**

#### **Critical thinking**

Provision in critical thinking is good.

|                                    |                |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
|                                    | Year 13        |
| Standards                          | Above average  |
| Achievement                        | Very good      |
| Teaching and learning              | Good           |
| Leadership                         | Very good      |
| Management                         | Very good      |
| Progress since the last inspection | Not applicable |

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

- Students achieve very well in examinations, considering how few lessons they have
- Good teaching enables students to understand how to gain maximum marks in examinations
- Learning is too heavily dependent on text based activities

#### **Commentary**

165. Critical thinking is a recently introduced core subject for all students in Year 12, replacing a general studies course which was unpopular with students. The course is delivered in one lesson each week over four terms, leading to an AS-level accreditation. Some students spoken with were resentful about the school's requirement to follow the course but the vast majority recognised its value in expanding their ability to analyse argument and think logically. They appreciated that individual arrangements are negotiated if the programme is putting undue pressure on any student. Many find the course valuable in adding to their A-level point score and, for the first time, some have chosen to take the A-level examination in Year 13.

166. Results for the two years the course has run have been above national averages. In 2004 AS level results were well above the national average, representing very good achievement on the part of students, considering over half the year group took the examination and the low amount of curriculum time allocated to the subject. A high proportion gained the top A and B grades. Students currently following the course achieved very well in a recent assessment, indicating that they are working securely at above the expected level.
167. Students achieve very well because they are motivated to make the most of the time available in lessons and particularly enjoy and benefit from working together in groups and developing their problem-solving skills. Teaching is good and based on a very good understanding of the subject specification. The teacher uses prepared support materials from the examination board to secure relevance and structure to students' learning. Students build up their understanding of the skills of critical thinking systematically through the study of a variety of text topics. In the lessons observed, students were successfully drawing together their understanding of selecting flaws and assumptions to analyse structure and evaluate a line of reasoning. In addition to achieving very well in the subject specific skills, students gained confidence by achieving in an area where they had not previously had any experience. Students are provided with a good quality subject handbook and other support booklets which effectively consolidate their work in class. Formal independent study is not an expectation of the course, but students are well motivated to use the support materials for themselves.
168. A strong emphasis is placed on the development of examination technique. Throughout lessons, students consider how they are doing and how they can gain maximum marks in examinations. The teacher uses a range of assessment strategies, including marking grids, peer and self-evaluation. Because of the limited lesson time given to the subject, the approach is based very strongly on the analysis of text. Although students have very good literacy skills overall, this approach is limiting for some who would benefit from more visual inputs. Learning was particularly effective when students were discussing issues in groups. The teacher's interventions skilfully deepened their thinking and understanding of both the topic under consideration as well as analysis of argument. As a consequence, the needs of students are well known and addressed. Students worked very well under pressure to reach conclusions quickly and make effective oral presentations of their views and findings, supported by well presented flip-chart information, to the rest of the class.
169. Leadership and management are very good. There is a very clear rationale for the subject's inclusion in the curriculum and planning to take it forward is appropriate. The subject is matched very well to examination board requirements and the scheme of work is evaluated and adjusted in the light of the early experiences of teaching the course. The subject was not offered at the time of the last inspection.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

| <i>Inspection judgement</i>   | <i>Sixth form grade</i> | <i>School grade</i> |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school</b>             | <b>3</b>                | <b>3</b>            |
| How inclusive the school is   |                         | 3                   |
| How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection          | 3                       | 3                   |
| Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school | 3                       | 3                   |
| <b>Overall standards achieved</b>   |                         | <b>3</b>            |
| Pupils' achievement   | 3                       | 3                   |
| <b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>                 |                         | <b>2</b>            |
| Attendance  | 3                       | 3                   |
| Attitudes   | 2                       | 2                   |
| Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions                                 | 2                       | 3                   |
| Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development                     |                         | 2                   |
| <b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>                        |                         | <b>3</b>            |
| The quality of teaching   | 3                       | 3                   |
| How well pupils learn   | 3                       | 3                   |
| The quality of assessment   | 2                       | 2                   |
| How well the curriculum meets pupils needs                                    | 4                       | 4                   |
| Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities              |                         | 2                   |
| Accommodation and resources   | 5                       | 4                   |
| 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                           | 3                       | 3                   |
| The effectiveness of the school's links with parents                          |                         | 3                   |
| The quality of the school's links with the community                          | 3                       | 3                   |
| The school's links with other schools and colleges                            | 3                       | 3                   |
| <b>The leadership and management of the school</b>                            |                         | <b>3</b>            |
| The governance of the school  | 3                       | 3                   |
| The leadership of the headteacher   |                         | 2                   |
| The leadership of other key staff   | 3                       | 3                   |
| The effectiveness of management   | 3                       | 3                   |

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