

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **John Hampden Grammar School**

High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110485

Headteacher: Mr Stephen Nokes

Lead inspector: Val Lynch

Dates of inspection 7<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> February 2005

Inspection number: 268836

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:	Grammar (selective)
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	11 - 18
Gender of pupils:	Male
Number on roll:	921
School address:	Marlow Hill High Wycombe Buckinghamshire
Postcode:	HP11 1SZ
Telephone number:	01494 529589
Fax number:	01494 447714
Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr John Anderson
Date of previous inspection:	March 1999

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

The school is an average size boys' grammar school with a large sixth form, located on the western outskirts of High Wycombe. There are 910 pupils in the school altogether and of these 231 are studying advanced academic courses in the sixth form. Year groups are small and a few boys not doing as well as they can in tests or GCSE examinations can have quite an impact on overall statistics. The current Year 7 is very small because the school is dependent on the proportion of pupils passing the 11+ and places available in other grammar schools. An above average proportion of boys join the school later in their secondary school career because there is an additional selection process in Buckinghamshire for grammar schools when pupils are aged 12 and 13 years. The school is a specialist technology college. It gained recognition as an Investors in People organisation in 2002, and a Sportsmark award in 2003. Attainment on entry is very high but slightly below other Buckinghamshire grammar schools. The proportion of pupils whose heritage language is not English is above average but all are confident and fluent in English. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs is very low. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is well below average.

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM**

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
1475	Val Lynch	Lead inspector	Special educational needs English as an additional language
10173	Catherine Hinds	Lay inspector	
31441	Maggie King	Team inspector	Mathematics
34521	Ruth Westbrook	Team inspector	English
30596	Jack Brown	Team inspector	Science
17156	Ted Graham	Team inspector	Information and communication technology
15606	Christine Hill	Team inspector	Art and design
32672	Stephen Hammond-Evans	Team inspector	Design and technology
32147	Ann Wallis	Team inspector	Geography
4317	Ken Madrell	Team inspector	History
33153	Philip Hingley	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
34084	Mary Davis	Team inspector	Music
18888	Jan Boulton	Team inspector	Physical education
20716	Arthur Grogan	Team inspector	Citizenship Religious education
33538	Alexandra Fleming	Team inspector	Chemistry
20619	Jenny Hazlewood	Team inspector	Business education

The inspection contractor was:

ALTECQ INSPECTIONS LTD  
102 Bath Road  
Cheltenham  
Gloucestershire  
GL53 7JX

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

## REPORT CONTENTS

	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 areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>14</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES – Work-related learning</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>22</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>46</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a **very good** school with many **excellent** features. Test and examination results are **very high** and pupils **achieve very well**. Teaching and learning are **very good**. Leadership and management are **very good**. The school provides **very good** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- There is an exceptionally dignified atmosphere in the school founded on the principles of mutual respect, self-worth and responsibility for themselves and others.
- Pupils are committed to doing their absolute best and have great respect for their teachers who have very good subject knowledge and expertise.
- Teachers make excellent use of challenging homework to promote independent work and to enable all pupils to show how well they are learning.
- Pupils' language and literacy skills are very high and enable them to reach the highest standards in all they do.
- The excellent leadership of the headteacher ensures that the strengths of the past are preserved alongside the development of a school for the future.
- There is an excellent range of activities outside lessons but not enough has been done in the past to improve the curriculum in the light of national advice and developments.

Improvement since the previous inspection is **very good**. Test and examination results have steadily improved, particularly the proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades. There has been a massive expansion in the use of ICT. Target setting for individual pupils is now good but is better in Years 10 and 11 than it is in Years 7 to 9. New appointments have been made to lead the English, mathematics and science departments. The time allocated to religious education is still not enough.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

#### Year 11 and 13 results

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

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

Test and examination results at the end of Years 9 and 11 are consistently **very high**. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in English, mathematics and science are the same as in similar schools. Teachers' assessments in all other subjects are also very high. It is at the very highest levels that results in English, mathematics and science, although well above average, are not as good as results in similar grammar schools. GCSE results were very high in most subjects, including English and mathematics. Results in physics were average. The proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades was well above average in most subjects. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels in biology, chemistry and physics is not as high as in other subjects. The school knows that pupils' achievement is not quite as good in Years 7 to 9 as it is in Years 10 and 11. National data indicates that, despite this, achievement from joining the school to the end of Year 11 is very good. Pupils from ethnic minority groups do slightly better than other pupils in tests and examinations. Pupils with special educational needs do as well as other pupils throughout the school. In 2004 GCE A-level results were well above average. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher grades was also well above average. Standards of work are very high in art and design and design and technology and achievement in these subjects is excellent. Standards are well above expectations

in English literature, mathematics, chemistry, geography, history, French and business, and achievement is very good. Pupils' and students' language and literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are very high enabling them to do very well in other subjects. ICT skills are well used and developed in other subjects, notably in design and technology where the specialist technology college development has been focused.

Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **excellent**. Pupils' respect for each other and adults is outstanding. Attendance is excellent because pupils enjoy school. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent. The school is a dignified and calm community.

### **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The overall quality of education provided by the school is **very good**. Teaching and learning are **very good**. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and create an atmosphere of mutual respect in lessons. All pupils respond with enthusiasm and commitment to their studies, evident in the high quality homework they produce. Assessment of pupils' work is very constructive so they know how to improve their work. The curriculum is good but the school has not yet used the increased flexibility available in Years 10 and 11 to broaden the courses offered and the opportunities it provides. There is an excellent range of activities outside lessons. Accommodation and resources are good. Care, guidance and support of pupils are very good. The school has very good links with parents and good links with other schools and the community. The school is benefiting from links with schools nationally through the specialist schools network.

### **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are **very good**. The headteacher is committed to excellence in both academic and personal achievement. He is well supported by a new senior leadership team who are bringing about improvements in areas where developments in the past have been slow. The leadership and management of all departments are at least good and in many cases are very good. The leadership provided by heads of school and heads of year is very good and ensures very good support for all pupils. The only weakness in the management of the school is that cross-curricular aspects such as work-related learning and ICT happen but are not co-ordinated. Nobody is taking responsibility for monitoring these aspects and their development. Governors are very good at holding the school to account and are very aware of the school's strengths and where improvements need to be made. The curriculum in the main school meets statutory requirements but the school does not report to parents on pupils' achievements in citizenship as is required.

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

Parents and pupils are unanimous in their praise for, and appreciation of, the school. They value the excellent relationships secured throughout the school community. Pupils say that they learn very well because teachers expect them to work very hard and the lessons are interesting. Pupils relish the many other activities provided for them especially in sport and music. The concerns raised by a few parents and pupils about behaviour are not corroborated by inspection evidence.

### **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Review the curriculum to take advantage of increased flexibility, make better use of time and to ensure sufficient time is given to religious education.
- Provide co-ordination of cross-curricular aspects of the school's work, notably work-related learning and ICT.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Assess and report to parents on pupils' achievements in citizenship.
- Ensure that time with form tutors is used effectively to fulfil governors' expectations of a daily act of collective worship.

## SIXTH FORM SECTION OF THE SUMMARY REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

The provision in the sixth form is **very good** with many **excellent** features. A-level results are well **above average** and achievement is **very good**. Teaching and learning are **very good** and assessment is **excellent**. Leadership and management are **very good**. The provision is **very cost effective**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students achieve very well because teaching is very good in all subjects inspected and students are exceptionally highly motivated.
- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and work is closely matched to examination requirements so students attain well above average A-level results.
- Very good leadership and management of the sixth form encourage students to become highly independent learners and responsible members of the school and society.
- Students have excellent relationships with their teachers, based on mutual respect and trust.
- Students participate in an excellent range of sporting, cultural and other activities that enrich their curriculum and further promote their personal development.

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

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

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	English is <b>very good</b> . Results in the 2004 A-level English literature examinations were well above average. Achievement is very good. Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject and prepare students very well for public examinations. French is <b>very good</b> . Examination results are very high and achievement is very good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject and make very good use of materials from the French media to motivate students.
Mathematics	Mathematics is <b>very good</b> . Standards are well above average and students achieve very well. Very good teaching enables students to develop as confident and self-reliant learners.
Science	Chemistry is <b>very good</b> . Exam results have steadily improved and are well above average. Teaching and learning are very good because very good planning engages the interest of the pupils.
Humanities	Geography is <b>very good</b> . Very knowledgeable and challenging teaching results in students achieving very well. The department is characterised by very high aspirations and expectations. History is <b>very good</b> . Results are very high and achievement is very good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and relationships between staff and students are excellent. The department makes excellent use of ICT to support learning
Engineering, technology and manufacturing	Design and technology is <b>excellent</b> . Achievement is excellent due to first class teaching that capitalises on students' enthusiasm and design skills. Computer aided designing and manufacture is outstanding.

Visual and performing arts and media	Art and design is <b>excellent</b> . Students achieve very well. Teaching and learning are excellent giving students quality experiences and heightened sensitivity to art and design.
Business	Business studies is <b>very good</b> . A-level examination results are very high. Students achieve very well because of their positive attitudes and very good teaching. Leadership and management are very good.

---

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

#### **ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT**

Staff know all their students exceptionally well. Teachers use their detailed understanding to support students' academic and personal development constantly and consistently. The school ensures that students are well prepared for the next stage of their education or career. There is a framework of support that ensures the well-being of all students. Students become highly responsible and mature because of the relationships and support they have from adults within the school.

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

Leadership and management of the sixth form is very good. The leadership of the school and the sixth form is committed to high expectations for students both academically and personally. The school has successfully improved examination results, particularly the proportion of students gaining the higher grades. The school aspires to produce mature, confident and sensitive young men and is eminently successful in doing so. Management of the team of tutors by the head of sixth form and the heads of Years 12 and 13 is very good. The opportunities provided for students outside of lessons are very impressive as are the opportunities for them to play a full role in the life and work of the school. They are outstanding role models for younger pupils who respect and admire them for who they are and the way they treat younger pupils. The school does not provide sufficient religious education for students in the sixth form.

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

Students speak very highly of the sixth form. They value the respect that underpins the life of the school and how well the school and sixth form are run. They appreciate the high quality of teaching especially the support and challenge they receive, which helps them to become independent learners and responsible adults. They value their roles as prefects and the way they are treated as young men, respected by staff and younger students.

## PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

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

In 2004 test results at the end of Year 9 and GCSE results were **very high**. In most subjects the standards of work seen are also **very high**. By the end of Year 11 achievement is **very good**. In the sixth form examination results are **well above average** and achievement is also **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve exceptionally high standards in design and technology.
- Very high literacy skills enable pupils to achieve very well in most subjects.
- Pupils' ICT skills are very high but inadequate co-ordination of assessment information across the school means that their skills are not accredited.
- The proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels in biology, chemistry and physics is not as high as in other subjects.

#### Commentary

1. When pupils join the school in Year 7 they are already working at a very high standard in English, mathematics and science. These standards are slightly below the standards on entry to other Buckinghamshire grammar schools. The school knows that pupils' achievement is not quite as good in Years 7 to 9 as it is in Years 10 and 11, when GCSE examinations add a sense of urgency to work and target setting. National data indicates that, despite this, achievement from joining the school to the end of Year 11 is very good. Pupils from ethnic minority groups do slightly better than other pupils in tests and examinations. Pupils with special educational needs do as well as other pupils throughout the school.

#### Key Stage 3

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

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	40.7 (44.0)	33.4 (33.3)
Mathematics	44.9 (45.9)	35.4 (34.7)
Science	41.3 (42.3)	33.6 (33.3)

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

2. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in English, mathematics and science are very high. These results have been improving in line with improvements nationally but dipped slightly in 2004. Teachers' assessments in all other subjects are also very high. Work seen during the inspection was also of a very high standard. Results are as good as those in similar schools. It is at the very highest level that results in English, mathematics and science, although well above average, are not as good as results in similar grammar schools. In all three subjects there have been significant staff changes in recent years that have affected results.
3. Achievement is excellent in design and technology and very good in almost half the subjects. It is good in English, mathematics and science. In English too few higher attainers are working at the highest levels and in mathematics there is insufficient attention given to the part of the curriculum that is about using and applying mathematics. In science not enough work has been done to make sure that standards are consistently high across the three disciplines of biology, chemistry and physics. In music achievement is good but there is not enough

emphasis on performing skills. In ICT achievement is good but teachers' assessments and teaching do not take account of the skills and expertise that pupils have and use in other subjects. Because of this too few pupils are accredited with gaining the highest levels at the end of Year 9. In religious education achievement is good and pupils are very enthusiastic about the subject but there is not enough time allocated to cover the locally agreed syllabus.

#### Key Stage 4

#### **Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2003**

	School results	National results
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	98.0 (98.0)	52.0 (52.0)
Percentage of pupils gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	98.0 (98.0)	89 (88)
Percentage of pupils gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	98.0 (99.0)	96.0 (96.0)
Average point score per pupil (best eight subjects)	51.0 (50.4)	34.9 (34.7)

*There were 128 pupils in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.*

4. In 2004 GCSE results were very high. Over recent years results have been improving at a slower rate than results nationally. Since 2000 there had been a downward trend that was arrested in 2003 with further improvement in 2004. Results were well above average in all subjects, including English and mathematics. Results in physics were average. The proportion of pupils gaining the highest grades was well above average in most subjects. In German the proportion gaining the higher grades was below average, reflecting the lower time allocated to German than French in Years 8 and 9. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels in biology, chemistry and physics is not as good as it is in other subjects. This is because there is not enough time to study three separate sciences.
5. Standards seen during the inspection are very high in comparison to what is expected, notably in English, mathematics, business, design and technology, geography, history, French, German, music and physical education. Standard are well above expectations in all other subjects, including biology and chemistry. In ICT standards on the GCSE ICT course are above average and achievement is good but again teaching and assessment do not take account of pupils' high levels of skill in other subjects, particularly design and technology which all pupils study in Years 10 and 11. Achievement continues to be excellent in design and technology and is very good in most other subjects. In English, mathematics, science, ICT and religious education achievement is good.
6. Pupils' language and literacy skills are very high enabling them to do very well in other subjects, particularly those that require high levels of literacy to gain the highest grades. Numeracy skills are very good. ICT skills are also very good and are well used and developed in other subjects, notably in design and technology where the developments of the school as a specialist technology college have been focused.

#### Sixth form

7. In 2004 GCE A-level results were well above average. The proportion of students gaining the higher grades was also well above average. Results were very high in ICT and well above average in art and design, business studies, English literature, French, design and technology, general studies, geography, history, mathematics, sociology and sports science.

They were above average in biology, chemistry and economics. They were average in English language and the school no longer offers this subject. Nine subjects were inspected in the sixth form. The standards of work seen are very high in art and design and design and technology and achievement in these subjects is excellent. Standards are well above expectations in English literature, mathematics, chemistry, geography, history, French and business and achievement is very good.

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

Attendance is **excellent**. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **excellent**. Their personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school achieves excellent attendance because the pupils enjoy coming to school.
- Pupils' respect for each other and adults is outstanding and they feel both safe and trusted.
- Pupils' willingness to learn is exceptionally good, and contributes to their very good achievement.
- Pupils conduct themselves exceptionally well so that the school is always a dignified and calm community.
- The personal development of all pupils is outstandingly promoted so that they feel free to express their feelings and emotions.
- Pupils constantly show initiative and are anxious to take responsibility for themselves and for others.

### **Commentary**

#### **Attendance**

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

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	4.6	School data	0
National data:	7.2	National data:	1.1

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

8. Pupils want to be at the school because they feel valued and cared for. As a result, the school has maintained a consistently excellent attendance in comparison to other schools. Absences and punctuality are rigorously monitored. A high level of attendance is maintained into the sixth form.
9. Attitudes towards learning are outstanding. Pupils want to do well and success is celebrated. In class pupils confidently articulate opinions and questions with maturity and listen attentively to teachers and other pupils. They are enthusiastic about practical tasks that offer them the opportunity to be responsible for their own learning and offer them freedom of expression. The same enthusiasm is shown for homework tasks and there is a sense of competition in achieving high grades.
10. Despite the lack of space to socialise during breaks, behaviour is very good. Corridors can become crushed during lesson changes but boys are usually sensible and there is little boisterous behaviour in unsupervised situations. Large numbers of pupils involve themselves in the wide variety of sporting and other activities available or make use of the library so that there is a sense of purpose to free time and the success of sporting teams and in other areas contributes to the pride that pupils show in their school. Teachers rarely have to raise their voices and pupils encourage each other to be quiet when a teacher needs to talk during

practical activities. The number of exclusions is low. Fixed period exclusions are used very effectively as part of the behaviour management policy.

## Exclusions

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

<b>Categories used in the Annual School Census</b>	<b>No of pupils on roll</b>	<b>Number of fixed period exclusions</b>	<b>Number of permanent exclusions</b>
White – British	802	27	1
White – Irish	6	0	0
White – any other White background	12	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	2	1	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	3	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	11	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	20	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	35	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	6	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	1	0	0
Black or Black British – African	1	0	0
Chinese	3	0	0
Any other ethnic group	3	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	14	0	0

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

- The school's ethos is centred round mutual respect and this can be seen in every aspect of school life. In assemblies pupils are encouraged to care for and be kind to one another and pupils commented that school was 'home away from home'. They are polite and courteous to teachers and visitors and there is little incidence of bullying. The school is not complacent about this issue, and sixth form prefects are currently setting up an anti-bullying scheme. Religious beliefs of others are both respected and celebrated and incidents of racism are very rare and are dealt with effectively. The school takes every opportunity to encourage the personal development of its pupils. In assemblies and form tutor time, staff and sixth form pupils express personal feelings in emphasising a strong moral and social code, stressing that being kind to one another and growing into gentlemen should have more importance than academic success. The impact of this is seen in many lessons where boys feel free to express

their own feelings through poetry and music in response to such events as Remembrance Day or their visits to war graves. In personal development lessons, difficult topics are dealt with sensitively and pupils show a remarkably mature attitude and consideration for the feelings of others. In religious education lessons there is outstanding support for boys' spiritual growth and they feel safe in expressing their personal feelings and emotions with the confidence that they will be supported through times of personal stress.

## Sixth form

12. The prefect system in the sixth form offers students the opportunity to take responsibility in a wide variety of areas, many involving the supervision and care of younger pupils. There is great respect for sixth form students from younger pupils because of the way they carry out their duties. Students elected to the school council take their responsibilities very seriously and have a stated aim to work together to make the school happy and successful. Students are encouraged to show initiative such as organising charity fund-raising events, concerts and dramatic productions but also personal initiative by looking after those who need help. Of particular note is the successful school production last year that was entirely managed by sixth form students, with the support of staff as needed. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own personal development during a week that focuses on work experience and community service ventures. Prefects confidently wear dinner jackets for school events such as the Christmas concert, impressively managing all the front of house procedures. Students relish responsibility and grow in confidence, composure and dignity as a result of what the school provides.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The overall quality of education provided by the school is **very good**. Teaching and learning are **very good**. The curriculum is **good**. Arrangements to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are **very good**.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **very good** in the main school and in the sixth form. Assessment is **very good** in the main school and **excellent** in the sixth form.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are characterised by excellent relationships and are conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and work is closely matched to examination requirements.
- Homework is set regularly and forms a highly successful and integral part of pupils' learning.
- Assessment of pupils' work is both very accurate and very constructive so they know how well they are doing and how to improve their work.
- Teaching and learning in English, mathematics and science, whilst good, are not of the same consistently very good quality as in most other subjects.
- Excellent assessment of students' work in the sixth form helps them to achieve very well.

### Commentary

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 131 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
13 (10%)	67 (51%)	36 (28%)	12 (9%)	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.*

13. Pupils learn very well as a result of very good teaching. Both parents and pupils are very positive about teaching at the school. Teachers and pupils respect each other and have excellent working relationships. All pupils respond very well to the very good teaching they receive. The proportion of very good and excellent lessons has improved markedly since the previous inspection. Teaching assistants support pupils with special educational needs very well. These pupils have targets for improvement but the targets are not always precise enough to tell teachers how they can fully support pupils' learning when teaching assistant are not there.
14. Teachers are very knowledgeable about their subjects and ensure that pupils are very well equipped with the skills and understanding required to do very well in examinations. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and pupils are challenged to do their best. All pupils respond to the very high expectations teachers have of them by working very hard and achieving very well. In most lessons teachers use a variety of interesting resources and teaching methods to engage pupils interest. However, in some English, mathematics and science lessons teaching and learning are not of the same consistently very good quality as they are in most other subjects. There have been a number of staffing issues in these departments that are still being worked on by relatively new heads of department. The mix of 35, 40, 70 and 80 minute lessons is not effective. Shorter single lessons do not always allow topics to be fully developed nor pupils to reflect on their learning.
15. Homework is an integral part of pupils' learning and increases their knowledge and skills very successfully. Teachers set relevant and interesting homework that extends pupils' learning and ensures they are fully prepared for subsequent lessons. Much of the in-depth work that cannot be covered in the shorter lessons is set for homework. Pupils enjoy much of the homework that is set and are extremely conscientious in its completion.
16. Pupils' work is marked regularly and they are given very good individual feedback on how to improve their work. Teachers use the assessment data they collect on individual pupils to set challenging targets in all subjects. Pupils' work is then closely monitored to assess their progress against the targets set.

## **Sixth form**

17. In the sixth form students take increased responsibility for their own learning. They respect their teachers and have excellent working relationships with them. Teachers have high expectations of, and high aspirations for their students. All students are challenged to think for themselves and work independently, which they do very effectively. Lessons are fast paced and stimulate a high level of interest in students. The assessment of students' work in the sixth form is excellent. Teachers mark work very thoroughly and give detailed individual feedback to students so they are able to improve their work further and achieve very well.

## **The curriculum**

The curriculum is **good** in the main school and the sixth form. There is an **excellent** range of activities outside lessons. Accommodation and resources are **good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The number of academic courses available meets pupils' and students' needs both in the main school and the sixth form.
- The school has not yet used the increased flexibility available to schools in Years 10 and 11 to widen the courses and opportunities it provides.
- The personal and social development course that includes citizenship is very good.
- Pupils' participation in the wide range of extra-curricular activities is very high.
- The time allocated to some subjects is insufficient to cover the course requirements.

## **Commentary**

18. The number of academic courses available meets the needs of all pupils, including those with special educational needs. The school holds high quality assemblies but does not have a daily act of collective worship, and so does not fully meet statutory requirements. The school's status as a specialist technology school is having an excellent impact on the provision for design and technology and a very good impact on the use of ICT across the curriculum. The school is undergoing a timely curriculum review. This has identified, as the inspection does, the need to make better use of time, to improve the management of cross-curricular work and to increase flexibility in courses in Years 10 and 11.
19. There is very little flexibility in the courses offered to pupils in Years 10 and 11. They do not have the option of vocational courses that are now available. Pupils have been entered early for examinations, mostly on an individual basis, but the school does not make enough use of this option. The large core of subjects in Years 10 and 11 includes three sciences. This limits the time available for free choice of other subjects. There is no provision for a GCSE course in physical education which would help pupils taking an A-level course in the subject.
20. The provision for personal, social and health education is very good. Well-structured programmes include sex and drugs education and incorporate citizenship. The school is very successful in promoting active citizenship in the way it works as a community. There is good provision for careers education and guidance. Work experience has not been part of the curriculum for a number of years but plans are in hand for it to be re-introduced in Year 10.
21. The range of activities to enrich the curriculum is excellent and participation rates are very high. Opportunities for sports and games are excellent. There is an extensive range of trips, excursions and residential visits at home and abroad. Opportunities exist for pupils to extend their learning outside the school day. Teachers have classrooms open at lunchtimes and there is very good access to ICT throughout the day.
22. Time on the curriculum is not used as well as it could be. In science the time allocated is too short to deliver three sciences. The time given to religious education is insufficient to cover the agreed syllabus. Forty-minute lessons limit what teachers and pupils can achieve. There is not enough time for in depth study nor to reflect on learning at the end of the lesson.
23. The school has a very effective team of well-qualified staff. Accommodation and resources are generally good. Most of the accommodation is purpose built and matches subject specific needs very well. Problems exist in music, mathematics and English where small teaching areas make teaching less effective. These difficulties will be largely overcome with the opening in September 2005 of the new building. Wheelchair and disabled access to many parts of the building is limited. Resources meet the needs of the pupils and the curriculum well. ICT facilities are good in many areas as a result of the school's technology college status.

## **Sixth form**

24. The curriculum is good and meets the needs of students although there is no religious education course. There are also no advanced vocational options available. Where there are difficulties in meeting the needs of individual students links are made with other schools but collaboration with schools and colleges is not used to widen the choice of what is available to all students. There is much more collaboration through the extra-curricular programme for public speaking, theatre productions, charity work and Young Enterprise scheme. There is a very wide range of enrichment activities and good use is made of outside speakers. There is good provision for careers education through the personal development programme and the Connexions service and students are encouraged to organise their own work experience.

## **Care, guidance and support**

Arrangements to ensure pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are **very good**. The school provides **very good** support, advice and guidance and has **very good** procedures for involving pupils in its work and development. **Excellent** procedures exist in the sixth form to support and involve students.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Staff promote excellent relationships with pupils so they feel safe, secure and valued.
- The school ensures that sixth formers are a major influence in the school.
- Staff track pupils' progress very carefully.
- Very well planned induction procedures help incoming pupils settle quickly.
- Day to day procedures for securing pupils' well-being are very effective.

### **Commentary**

25. The school has a very calm and caring ethos. Relationships between adults and pupils are characterised by mutual respect and trust. All pupils feel there is always someone they can trust to help them if they have concerns or problems. They value the very good support provided by their tutors and heads of year. Most staff participate in the excellent programme of additional activities. This extra contact with pupils cements the bonds and respect developed in the classrooms and corridors.
26. Staff know pupils exceptionally well and are very alert to any change in a pupil's demeanour. They take prompt action to provide support and to help the pupils to recover. Teachers track pupils' academic progress very effectively and involve pupils well in evaluating their own work and setting targets so that they know what they need to do next to improve. The setting of targets and tracking progress against these targets is stronger in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. The school provides good careers guidance for each individual so that pupils approach the next stage of their education or training confidently. Pupils know that their views matter. Year 7 pupils are encouraged to speak honestly with the headteacher about their induction and opinions of the school. This assures them that they are important in the school. The school continues to seek pupils' views regularly, making very good use of questionnaires. Pupils enjoy the various school councils, and take their responsibilities very seriously.
27. Staff work very effectively with local primary schools to ensure a smooth transition into Year 7. Pupils confirm that they settle very well in their new surroundings and quickly establish secure relationships. They relish the residential visit for individual tutor groups and identify very closely with their group because of this shared experience. Sixth formers also participate in these residential visits, establishing relationships with younger pupils that continue during their first year at the school.
28. Staff promote a safe and healthy environment very effectively. Daily routines are carried out thoroughly. Highly proficient and very willing support staff ensure that information about pupils' needs flows very efficiently. Matron not only provides exceptionally high quality support for sick and injured pupils but tenaciously follows up any pupils who are absent. Specialist staff provide sensitive and well considered help to pupils with specific individual needs. Child protection arrangements are secure. Health and safety arrangements are rigorous so that any risks are carefully assessed.

### **Sixth form**

29. Students express their opinions extremely thoughtfully and responsibly because they know that the school takes their views very seriously. Staff treat them as adults and students value and respect this. Students are excellent ambassadors for the school. Staff foster a strong sense of corporate responsibility within the students through the constant promotion of involvement in all aspects of school life. Students are exceptionally well supported through the sixth form because staff know them very well. A clearly defined programme of support and guidance begins as soon as they declare their intentions in Year 11. Academic progress is

extremely well monitored, first at subject level through individual discussion and review, and then by pastoral staff who have a very good overview. High quality feedback gives students clear guidance on how to improve. Well informed staff provide individual students with the care and attention they need to make informed choices about their future careers.

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

The school has **very good** links with parents and **good** links with other schools and the community.

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

- The school works very closely with parents, securing parents' commitment to the school and their child's education.
- Several departments have particularly strong links with other schools and the community.
- The school uses its technology school status very well to establish strong links with local primary schools but doesn't use links with schools and colleges to extend the curriculum.
- Sixth form students benefit from very productive links with the community.

#### **Commentary**

30. Staff work very hard and effectively to include parents in their child's education. Staff know the pupils and their families very well and involve parents quickly when necessary. The school surveys parental opinion regularly, and very active parent governors ensure that parents' views are included in future school development planning. Parents report that any concerns are handled very effectively using correct procedures. Staff communicate particularly well with parents of children who have any special educational or additional needs. The school values the many parents who help the school either within the school's daily life or in supporting the excellent extra curricular activities. There is very good general information for parents on the website or in attractive and informative booklets and newsletters. Annual reports are good. Teachers provide good detail about individual pupils' performance. Reports also include useful suggestions for further improvement for both teachers and pupils. Parents value the termly grade cards that enable them to check their child's progress during the year. The school makes excellent use of homework, and secures parental involvement by promoting pupils' rigorous and routine use of homework planners.
31. Pupils meet others from local schools through many sporting and artistic events and competitions in a wide range of subjects. These activities also facilitate the sharing of staff interest, skill and experience between John Hampden and other schools. Many of these additional activities are supported by, and involve, people from the local community. The school nurtures pupils' talents by promoting constructive links with local clubs and organisations.
32. The school's status as a technology college is evident in many aspects of school life. Links have emerged that benefit the school, and other local schools. The school shares its facilities, skills and expertise with primary pupils and staff. Pupils are actively involved in this work, alongside staff. Primary pupils approach the transfer to John Hampden School confidently because they have already used the school's facilities and have met several teachers and pupils. Although the school takes a lead in developing a local network of schools, not enough use is made of these links or links with colleges to extend the range of subjects offered, particularly in Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form. The school has well-established links with local universities.
33. Sixth form students value the many opportunities created for them to extend their learning in the community. They praise the personal development week, where they are expected to contribute to a local organisation, including schools, by sharing their skills or learning about the world of work. Many people from the community visit the school to support a wide range of sixth form activities. The school uses a good range of local people to support the curriculum in the main school. Some departments, such as physical education and art and design, make

better use of the local community to broaden pupils' experiences than others, such as history, geography, English and music.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management throughout the school are **very good**. The headteacher provides **excellent** leadership. The governance of the school is **very good**. Other key staff provide **very good** leadership. Management is **very effective**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher's commitment to excellence is reflected throughout the life of the school.
- The governors rigorously hold the school to account for its performance but some statutory requirements are not met.
- The new senior leadership team is already securing many improvements in key areas where developments have been slow.
- There are weaknesses with the co-ordination of ICT and work-related learning.

### Commentary

34. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent. He is successfully building on the foundation of a very good school and moving it forward. The blend of his dignified presence and friendly manner sets the tone for the whole school community. He is committed to excellence and shows that he values and respects all who are involved in the school, particularly pupils. Since taking up his appointment he has overseen many significant improvements, including an improvement in examination results. The school has gained specialist college status, Investors in People, and Sportsmark awards.
35. Governors use their specialist knowledge, experience and skills to the benefit of the school. They have a very good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are very focused on raising standards. They interpret performance data rigorously and routinely to support the school's target setting process. Whilst the governing body have fulfilled most of its statutory duties the school does not fully meet the requirements for reporting on citizenship to parents, providing religious education for all students in Year 13 or for providing a daily act of collective worship. Nevertheless, governance is very good as none of these have a negative impact on the experiences of pupils.
36. The dedicated, effective and hard working senior leadership team supports the headteacher very well. Recent reorganisation of the team now provides very good leadership and management of the curriculum and teaching and learning. Effective line management of departments and pastoral staff provides a clear picture of strengths and weaknesses across the school. Most heads of department provide very good leadership and management. They plan effectively, make very good use of performance data to set targets and monitor and evaluate teaching and learning. Heads of year and heads of school provide very good leadership and management to their teams of tutors. The leadership and management of special educational needs is good. The use of a learning support assistant as the special educational needs manager is innovative and successful. The arrangements for staff induction and professional development are very effective. The school has very good systems for performance management.

37. There is a lack of co-ordination of those aspects of the school's work that cuts across individual subjects and years, for example, work-related learning, ICT and citizenship. There is no co-ordinator for work-related learning. Individual teachers work successfully with pupils to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding of the world of work. However, there has been no audit of work-related learning across the school and there are no procedures for its monitoring and evaluation. ICT across the curriculum is not well co-ordinated. Planning and assessment of ICT fail to recognise the considerable contribution that other subjects make to the development of pupils' skills. In citizenship there are weaknesses in the way work is assessed and reported to parents.
38. Financial management of the school is very good. The school monitors income and expenditure very carefully. The school follows best value principles and ensures that value for money is achieved on all purchases. The recent audit of school finances by the local authority confirms the very efficient procedures. The school provides very good value for money and the sixth form is very cost effective. In the financial year 2003 to 2004 the school planned a higher than expected carry-forward to meet a known cost related to a reduction in pupil numbers in Year 7.

## Financial information

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

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	3,281,906	Balance from previous year	147,314
Total expenditure	3,258,728	Balance carried forward to the next	170,492
Expenditure per pupil	3,527		

## Sixth form

39. Leadership is committed to high expectations for students both academically and personally. The school seeks to continually improve examination results and to ensuring that all students fulfil their potential. There is a strong vision for how the school can provide opportunities for and be successful in ensuring excellent personal development of all sixth form students. Management of the team of tutors by the head of sixth form and heads of Years 12 and 13 is very good. It creates a secure framework for ensuring the well-being of all students. There are regular meetings to plan and review the tutorial programme. Subject leadership and management is very good. Teamwork is very effective in planning the AS and A-level courses and in developing very good teaching. The school does not provide religious education for students in the sixth form.

## OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

### Work-related learning

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

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work-related learning is not yet effectively co-ordinated across the school.
- There is a good programme for careers education and guidance.
- The Year 9 enterprise project enables pupils to develop skills and approaches used in business very well.
- Pupils in Year 10 and 11 have not had opportunities for work experience.

- The Young Enterprise scheme provides a valuable opportunity for sixth form students to learn about running a small business.

## **Commentary**

40. The school has not yet identified a co-ordinator for work-related learning to ensure that the statutory requirements are fully met. Many staff have worked outside teaching so they use their own experiences in lessons. They provide very good role models so that as pupils progress through the school they acquire many of the attitudes and qualities that are valued in the workplace. Pupils have a wealth of opportunities to prepare for the world of work, for example, they take responsibility for their own learning, act as a member of a team in sporting activities, and as prefects in the sixth form. However, there are too few planned opportunities for pupils to learn through work, about work and for work, especially in Years 10 and 11.
41. There are close links between the Connexions careers service and the school. Pupils develop their knowledge of a range of careers in the good careers programme from Year 7 onwards. This enables pupils to make informed choices for GCSE and advanced level study based on their career aspirations.
42. At the end of Year 9 pupils gain a valuable insight into the world of business enterprise from their active involvement in a project that involves planning for and launching the European tour for a new band. The project is supported well by many subjects, in particular business studies and French, and the cross-curricular approach has a positive impact on the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills because pupils work as part of a team, solve problems and make presentations. Year 12 students experience the consequences and benefits of being young entrepreneurs through the Young Enterprise programme.
43. Sixth form students are encouraged to carry out work experience during school holidays and as part of their personal development programme. There has been a lack of planned opportunities for work experience in Years 10 and 11 for far too long. The school is now working closely with the education business partnership to re-introduce work experience for Year 10 pupils. Because of the lack of leadership and management of this aspect of the school's work provision is underdeveloped and the potential of work-related learning has not been fully recognised.

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

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

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

##### **English**

Provision in English is **good**.

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

- Good teaching challenges pupils to think for themselves.
- Homework makes a strong contribution to the study of English.
- Assessment is thorough and helpful for pupils.
- Some pupils do not have enough variety in their English lessons.

##### **Commentary**

44. Results in tests at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were very high, but just below average compared to similar schools. In the past too few higher attainers have reached the highest levels. The very high standard of work of the current Year 9 indicates that their achievement is good in all aspects of the subject. The re-designed scheme of work for Years 7 to 9 is contributing to the improvement in standards seen during the inspection. GCSE results in English language and English literature in 2004 were very high for grades A\*-C, but the proportion attaining grades A\* and A was below average and lower than the number gaining these grades in previous years. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported in the department and their achievement is good. Pupils for whom English is not their heritage language have very well developed English language skills and their achievement is good. Oral skills of pupils are very good. Pupils read fluently, and are particularly adept at writing extended essays in response to questions. The standard of creative writing is very high. Overall, achievement is good.
45. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 11. The best lessons are planned to challenge pupils to think for themselves about the meaning of the language and themes of the text they are studying. Good questioning is used to challenge the most able pupils to think more deeply or creatively on a topic. Where teaching is satisfactory there is less encouragement and opportunity for pupils to think for themselves and little variety in tasks. In some lessons, pupils respond very well to opportunities to discuss their opinions of a text with other pupils, and their understanding develops as a result. These opportunities are not consistent across all classes. Where teaching is satisfactory, teachers use teaching methods which are less imaginative and do not stimulate a high level of interest. The setting and conscientious completion of homework make an important contribution to pupils' high standards. This includes carrying out research or preparing work for a future lesson. Assessment of pupils' work is very good. Work is marked thoroughly and regularly, and gives very good feedback to pupils on the progress they are making. Pupils are beginning to evaluate their own and each other's work, and can understand how this will help them to improve. Very good working relationships exist between teachers and pupils, and pupils feel confident to share their thoughts and feelings in class, sometimes on emotive and sensitive topics.
46. Leadership and management are good. The head of department has a good vision of what the department has to do to continue to raise standards. The department has put effective plans in place to address the underachievement of pupils at GCSE grades A\* and A. Work on revising schemes of work is well underway. Monitoring and evaluation of the department's work are beginning to raise standards, and emphasise the need to develop teaching and learning styles. The development of a close-working team with a shared agenda is now a priority for the department, and support is in place from senior management to ensure that this happens. The high quality of the display of pupils' work demonstrates to pupils how their work is valued. The department makes a very strong contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and

cultural development of pupils. During Year 10's study of war poetry, pupils are encouraged to write their own poetry and the sensitivity and understanding shown are very moving. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. Teaching has improved and there is now no unsatisfactory teaching in the department. GCSE results are not as good as at the time of the previous inspection at the highest grade, but effective plans are in place to address this. Leadership of the department has improved, particularly in the consistency of monitoring and support.

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

47. The standards of literacy are very high. The school makes good provision for literacy to be developed across all subjects. The literacy co-ordinator promotes a whole school approach that includes a number of good strategies such as requiring every pupil to carry and use a dictionary. Teachers are given good guidance in the literacy policy on how to promote a range of literacy skills in their lessons. A training day for staff was held in 2001 which made a good start in promoting the literacy strategy to all staff in the school, but there has been little whole school follow up since. As a result, the impetus for the initiative is less focused in some departments now than earlier, and new members of staff are not fully aware of the school's policy. A number of departments make a very good contribution to the development of literacy skills. In English, history and religious education there is an emphasis on extended essay writing and guidance on how to structure and plan answers. In religious education there are very good opportunities for discussion and debate on suitably challenging topics that develop pupils' thinking before writing essays. In geography, music, science and design and technology there is an insistence on using subject specific vocabulary both in spoken and written work.

### **Modern foreign languages**

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

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

- Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent.
- Teachers are very knowledgeable and plan very good lessons but some do not make enough use of the target language.
- The leadership of the department sets high standards for teaching and monitors work very effectively.
- There is not enough time allocated to German in Year 8.

### **Commentary**

48. The standards of work seen in Years 7 to 9 are very high compared to those expected nationally. Pupils performed slightly better in French than in German in assessments at the end of Year 9. The same is true of Years 10 and 11. GCSE results in modern foreign languages in 2004 were very high compared to national averages. This represents very good achievement and pupils performed better in modern foreign languages than in most other subjects. The results show an improving trend since the previous inspection. There were fewer A\* grades in German than in French. Pupils study both languages to Year 9, but have one lesson fewer per week in German in Year 8. The difference in standards is mainly due to this.
49. Teaching is very good because the teachers have a very good or excellent knowledge of their subject and have exceptionally good relationships with the pupils. In most lessons, teachers use French and German very well and set high expectations that improve pupils' speaking skills. However, some teachers do not use the languages enough, and in those classes pupils speak less fluently and with a less authentic accent than they should. Teachers' lesson planning is consistently very good and includes planning how they will use classroom assistants where necessary, enabling all pupils to learn well. In one Year 9 lesson, the teacher

combined these positive features with challenging pace and sensitive use of humour. This resulted in full involvement and good learning by the whole class. Pupils' written work is marked regularly and carefully and teachers give very good verbal information to the pupils, but give insufficient written information about how they can improve.

50. The department benefits from very good, energetic leadership. The head of department has a very clear vision for the future and pursues it purposefully. He leads by setting a very good professional example and has created a skilled team of teachers who work very effectively together. The department is very well managed and its main aim, to improve teaching and learning, is very well supported by extremely thorough data analysis and regular classroom observation. This not only identifies strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning, but also helps teachers to develop a variety of teaching styles to help pupils learn better. There is an excellent range of opportunities to visit the countries where French and German are spoken. This allows pupils to appreciate the culture and history of these countries whilst giving them the chance to practice what they have learned. Links with local schools also bring excellent mutual benefit through the sharing of resources. The department has addressed the development points from the previous inspection and has made good progress on all of them. It has made excellent progress in ICT by securing funding for a digital language laboratory. It is used very well in lessons and is valued by pupils as an important support for their independent learning at lunchtimes.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards have remained consistently very high and pupils achieve well.
- Standards in using and applying mathematics, while well above average, are less high than in other aspects of mathematics.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and prepare pupils thoroughly for examinations.
- The new head of department knows the department very well and has clear priorities for improvement.
- Teaching methods lack variety and ICT is underused as a tool to enhance learning.

### **Commentary**

51. Results in national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were very high and in line with similar schools. They continue a trend of consistently very high results. Standards in the current Year 9 are also very high. This represents good achievement for pupils, including those with special educational needs. Pupils of all abilities demonstrate increasingly good understanding of mathematics and solve problems successfully using techniques they have been taught. GCSE results in 2004 were also very high and better than similar schools. They were a significant improvement on previous results, particularly in the proportion of the highest grade. They represent good achievement especially for the most able pupils. Standards in the current Year 11 are also very high. Pupils tackle demanding work with increasing confidence. Throughout the school, standards in using and applying mathematics are less good than in other aspects of the subject and coursework marks are generally lower than examination marks at GCSE. Achievement is good overall. It is satisfactory in using and applying mathematics.
52. Teaching and learning are good although the quality varies from unsatisfactory to very good. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject and examination requirements. Pupils undertake regular tests and practice questions so that they are very well prepared for examinations. Homework is set regularly and frequently so pupils develop skills in learning independently. Work is marked but the marking rarely includes guidance on how pupils can improve. There is a good balance between demonstrating techniques and individual practice and teachers use effective questioning to provoke pupils' thinking. Teachers provide extension tasks that challenge the most able pupils. Teaching methods lack variety and there is little use

of ICT. As a result, pupils do not fully develop their skills in extended investigations or in applying the techniques learned in real life contexts. In some lessons, starters are used to motivate pupils, relationships are strong and a very good pace is maintained. In less good lessons, teachers do not engage fully with pupils, relationships are less constructive and the pace is too slow. The variable lesson length affects learning. Some lessons are too short for topics to be explored in depth, while in longer lessons some teachers do not maintain momentum throughout. Pupils have very good attitudes, which contribute to their good learning.

53. Leadership is very good and management is good. Systems and procedures are well established. The new head of department has a clear vision and provides a very good role model through his own teaching. He has a very good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of subject provision, gained from rigorous monitoring and questionnaires to pupils. He has established priorities and has taken action to address identified weaknesses. This is starting to have an impact, for example, in sharing good practice, though there has not yet been sufficient time to secure consistency in the quality of teaching or to improve pupils' achievement. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. There has been a period of staff turbulence but the department is now fully staffed with specialists. Standards have risen and good achievement has been maintained. Issues of presentation of work have been addressed. There is some improvement in the match of work to pupils' needs, though there is need for further development of this aspect of teaching, especially for less able pupils.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

54. Pupils show well above average competence in applying the skills learned in mathematics lessons in their other subjects. For example, in business studies, pupils use statistical techniques with exemplary skill. In history, geography and science pupils are highly competent at using and interpreting graphs, tables and charts, as well as transforming data from one form to another. In art and design they show an exceptional understanding of scale, perspective and proportion. There is, however, insufficient monitoring of provision across the curriculum and the re-enforcement of mathematical skills outside mathematics lessons is not systematic.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards at the end of Year 9 are very high.
- Very good use is made of homework, revision guides and tests to support learning.
- Assessment is used effectively to set challenging targets that motivate pupils.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning is not used effectively to ensure consistency and spread of good practice.
- Teaching of physics in Years 10 and 11 lacks variety and consequently pupils do not work with the interest to achieve the highest grades.
- Very good working relationships give pupils the confidence to join in discussions.

### **Commentary**

55. Results have been consistently well above average at the end of Year 9, though the numbers obtaining the highest levels have been slightly below those of similar schools. Work seen during the inspection confirms these very high standards. The recent improved co-ordination between the separate physics, chemistry and biology departments since the previous report has raised standards. Results at the end of Year 11 are well above average in chemistry, physics and biology. However, the number of pupils achieving the highest levels in physics is below average. This is mainly due to the lack of variety in the teaching and learning methods

and in consequence pupils work with less enthusiasm and interest. Overall, pupils achieve well in science and many continue with science subjects into the sixth form.

56. Teaching and learning are good. There is very little unsatisfactory teaching and this is an improvement from the previous report. There are very good examples of teaching in the science department, but the monitoring of teaching and learning is not rigorous enough to ensure consistency and the spread of good practice. In the very good lessons, there is a variety of learning methods, the pace is rapid and the frequent checks of understanding show that learning is very good. In the occasional lesson where the planning is less precise or is too much directed by the teacher, pupils work with less interest and enjoyment. In Years 10 and 11 the teaching of physics is more traditional and less exciting, but this is partly due to a lack of resources and computers that would allow pupils to work individually. Teachers make very good use of homework, tests and revision guides to make sure that pupils are fully aware of examination requirements. Pupils respond extremely well to this and work independently and learn well. Pupils have a very good understanding of scientific method and high attainers evaluate their investigative work with maturity and understanding. Pupils are fully involved in many discussions and further develop their literacy skills through writing their own descriptions and conclusions. Teachers have greatly improved their use of ICT to make learning easier, but the lack of equipment in the laboratories means that pupils do not get access to computers on an individual basis. The curriculum allocation of one double and one single lesson to each of the separate sciences in Years 10 and 11 is short. In consequence the single lesson is either very rushed or heavily reliant on teacher direction and theory.
57. Leadership and management are good. Assessment and analysis of results are used effectively to improve curriculum planning and to set motivating targets for pupils. The head of science is fostering good teamwork with a feeling of collective responsibility for improving standards that are already high. He is providing the necessary leadership to take the science department forward. The science department has made good improvement from the previous inspection.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

Provision for information and communication technology is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve good standards in lessons.
- The good attitudes and motivation of pupils contribute to good learning.
- Good teachers produce well-prepared lessons.
- Good progress has been made in providing more computer-based equipment.
- ICT is frequently well used in other subjects but it is not monitored or assessed.

### **Commentary**

58. The standards achieved by pupils at the end of Year 9 in 2004 were well above average but based on unverified teacher assessments. In separate specialist lessons for ICT the current standard of work for Years 7 to 9 is above expectations and achievement is good. In 2004 the school introduced a GCSE course in ICT for the first time. The standard of work in Year 10 is good and achievement is good. Pupils undertake a good range of interesting projects to develop their knowledge and understanding, for example, in developing a theatre booking system and analysing mobile telephone tariffs.
59. Teaching and learning are good and sometimes very good. Lessons are well prepared and the work set is challenging. Homework is used well to extend lessons or to prepare for a future topic. Pupils are effectively challenged in lessons to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. Pupils at all levels are well motivated and make good progress. There are good extra-curricular opportunities for pupils to use ICT. Display is not used effectively as a resource to support teaching or learning. Assessment is well established in Years 7 to 9 and

shared with pupils but does not inform them of their National Curriculum level. In Year 10, assessment is good and pupils are well informed about their performance. They are given target grades and good guidance for improvement.

60. Leadership and management are satisfactory. There are good procedures in place to monitor and evaluate the performance of the department effectively. A good scheme of work in place meets statutory requirements for Years 7 to 9 but is difficult to teach within the time provided in separate lessons. Little account is taken of ICT taught through other subjects that could contribute to the teaching of the scheme of work. Links to cross-curricular themes, for example, numeracy and literacy, are not evident in planning. Accommodation for teaching ICT is satisfactory. The two dedicated rooms for ICT are well equipped but limited in size. The learning resource centre provides good facilities for ICT that are used well by pupils throughout the school day. There has been good progress since the previous inspection with substantial funding to improve the provision of computer-based equipment for teaching and learning.

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

61. The overall use of ICT across the whole curriculum is good and the capability of pupils is very good in many instances. The use of ICT is still developing although there are examples of very good practice in several subjects. For example, there is excellent use of ICT in design and technology and music. There is good use of ICT in history, geography, business studies and in the sciences. Many pupils make good independent use of ICT, often through homework tasks, for research on the Internet and using word processing or desktop publishing. However, subjects across the curriculum do not contribute to the ICT scheme of work in Years 7 to 9 or to the assessment of ICT capability at the end of Year 9. There is no overview of the use of ICT across the curriculum in Years 10 and 11. Subjects are meeting their statutory requirements but work in other subjects is not formally monitored or evaluated.
62. There is no clear vision for the development of ICT across the curriculum. There is an annual plan for the purchase of ICT equipment based on requests from subject departments but there is no long-term plan to identify future financing, hardware required and the essential staff training to ensure its effective use. There is not a culture of identifying and sharing good practice to raise standards or to stimulate the use of ICT across the curriculum. The school has made good progress from the situation in the previous inspection in extending facilities and the use of ICT across the curriculum.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **History**

Provision in history is **very good**.

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

- Relationships in the classroom are excellent.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge.
- Very good assessment practices help pupils to improve.
- There is insufficient use of ICT to support pupils' learning.
- There are no educational visits for pupils in Years 7 to 10.

### **Commentary**

63. In 2004, at the end of Year 9 teacher assessments were very high. Standards in the current Year 9 are very high. In 2004, GCSE results were very high and have been consistently so in recent years. Standards in the current Year 11 are very high. In all years pupils have excellent factual knowledge and understanding. They have very good skills with the analysis and interpretation of sources. Their written work is very good, they use their historical knowledge

very well to describe and explain events. Their written work is very good. Coursework assignments are outstanding. They show pupils' excellent application of historical knowledge. Pupils enter the school with standards that are very high. The achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 9 and those who opt for the subject in Years 10 and 11 is very good. This is because of very good teaching and the very positive attitudes they display to learning. The achievement of pupils with special educational needs is very good. Pupils of all abilities and of all ethnic backgrounds achieve equally well.

64. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers use their very good subject knowledge well to support pupils' learning. They are enthusiastic and committed and use a range of effective approaches in the classroom that make learning fun but purposeful. High quality explanations and skilful questioning enable pupils to learn well. In Years 7 to 9 the use of ICT is unsatisfactory. There is insufficient use of computers for research and to support their writing. Pupils' work is very well marked. They have a clear understanding of their strengths and weaknesses and how they are performing against national expectations. Very good use is made of model answers to develop pupils' understanding of GCSE questions and to help pupils achieve high grades. Relationships in the classroom are excellent and pupils display very good attitudes to their work. They enjoy the subject, are fully engaged in their learning and want to do well.
65. Leadership and management of history are very good. There is a strong commitment to raising standards. Teamwork is effective and members of the department regularly share ideas and review approaches used in the classroom. In Year 11, a visit to the European battlefields helps pupils develop a better understanding of the subject matter but there are no educational visits for pupils in Years 7 to 10. This is a weakness. There are good procedures for reviewing the work of the department. They focus on clearly defined areas and are helping to improve teaching and learning. There is very good use of performance data to monitor and track pupils' performance. Specialist teachers are very well qualified and learning resources are of very good quality and meet the needs of the curriculum well. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good. The quality of teaching and marking has improved. Procedures to review the work of the department are now in place and teachers are better supported with their professional development. However, there is still insufficient use of ICT.

## **Geography**

Provision in geography is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Results in Year 9 tests and GCSE examinations in 2004 were very high.
- Lessons are very well structured and fast paced so pupils achieve very well.
- Relationships are excellent and lessons are conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust.
- Very good leadership and management result in a department characterised by very high aspirations and very high expectations of pupils.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have insufficient opportunities to develop their enquiry skills through fieldwork.

### **Commentary**

66. At the end of Year 9 results in teacher assessments were very high. In 2004 GCSE examination results were very high and well over three-quarters of pupils attained the highest A\* and A grades. Pupils attained higher grades in geography than in the other subjects they took. These results represent very good achievement for both Year 9 and Year 11 pupils compared to their attainment when they entered the school. In work seen standards in geography are very high in both Year 9 and Year 11. Pupils in all years achieve very well. Higher attaining pupils use specialist terminology very confidently to give detailed explanations

of, for example, the causes of rainfall. Pupils with special educational needs achieve very well because teachers and classroom assistants give them constructive individual help.

67. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers are very knowledgeable and structure their lessons very well so pupils move briskly from one task to the next and are very productive. Lessons challenge pupils to think for themselves in order to solve geographical problems and find solutions. For example, Year 10 pupils responded very well to a challenging role-play task concerning the management of coastlines. Work is closely tailored to examination requirements so pupils develop the skills needed to succeed at GCSE level. Teachers assess pupils' work thoroughly and accurately. Pupils and teachers respect each other and their working relationships are excellent. This creates a very positive atmosphere of learning in lessons. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 do not have sufficient opportunities to take part in fieldwork investigations in order to develop their geographical skills further in a practical context.
68. Leadership and management are very good. A clear vision ensures that a balance is kept between maintaining current high standards and embracing new ideas to secure further improvement. The department works very well collaboratively. All staff expect their pupils to attain the highest standards they are capable of and pupils respond by working very hard and achieving very well. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good because examination and test results have improved and pupils' achievement is now very good. The department has both the capacity and commitment to improve even further.

## **Religious education**

Provision in religious education is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Expert teaching maximises pupils' learning in the short lessons.
- Standards are high on the GCSE course.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy their learning, work hard and achieve a lot in the lessons.
- The time allocated to religious education in Years 10 and 11 is only half that recommended, which limits pupils' achievement overall.
- Pupils gain an adequate overview of other faiths by Year 9 but lack knowledge in depth of an eastern religion.

### **Commentary**

69. Pupils achieve well and exceed the standards expected in the agreed syllabus by Year 9. They have a very good knowledge and understanding of Christianity and Judaism and know their way around the Bible. Their knowledge of other faiths is weaker, having a reasonable overview but lacking an in-depth study of one of the eastern religions. In class debate and subsequent written work pupils showed high ability at evaluating humanist and religious solutions to saving the planet. They are very capable at finding out information for homework and could extend the scope of their investigations. Standards in Year 11 are also above the level expected by the agreed syllabus and pupils achieve well over the course. Pupils gain a very good understanding of Islam, benefiting from the input to lessons of sixth form Muslim pupils. GCSE results were high in 2004 and the ten Year 11 pupils preparing for the examination this year are producing essays of a similar standard, reflecting very good achievement over the course. In lessons, Year 10 pupils were highly articulate at expressing their views in class discussion.
70. Teaching is very good overall and often excellent. An outstanding feature of teaching and learning is the promotion of spiritual development in all years, through frequent opportunities for pupils to contemplate on religious beliefs and values and see how they apply to their own lives. Pupils respond extremely well to learning from religion in this way and develop a heightened awareness of the spiritual dimension to life. The spiritual atmosphere created in the religious education room, along with excellent teacher/pupil relationships and respect for

each other's views, produce ideal conditions for sharing ideas and insights. Expert subject knowledge and detailed planning around focused objectives ensure best use is made of the single lessons. The pace is fast and the variety of learning styles is stimulating, using multimedia materials to engage interest and inform discussion. Homework is used very well, often giving pupils a choice of assignments, to extend learning in Years 7 to 9 and on the GCSE course. Pupils are given web references to research and have access to the class computer but single lessons make class use of ICT impracticable. Training in examination technique is excellent, focused around GCSE questions and developing essay writing most effectively. On the non-GCSE course learning is not advanced through formal homework and assessment is purely by pupil survey.

71. Leadership of the subject is excellent, inspired by a strong sense of vocation to provide high quality religious education and spiritual guidance to the boys. Management is very good but the school has not invested the necessary time and staffing to develop religious education as an academic subject. Overall, improvement since the previous inspection has been satisfactory. Continued development of teaching and learning styles has led to a notable improvement in performance at GCSE. The two previous inspections pointed out the shortage of time for the subject in all years. It still remains at a single period in each year, which is half the teaching time recommended in the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Much as the very good teaching compensates for this inadequacy, it still limits what pupils achieve overall.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Design and technology**

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

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

- Current standards are very high in all areas, made possible by excellent teaching and learning, and the expert knowledge of the teachers.
- The development of ICT skills enables pupils to present their ideas in a very professional manner with a range of computer-aided design and manufacturing equipment.
- Pupils are given many opportunities to exercise choices, which promote interest, motivation and pride in the development of their own ideas.
- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are excellent which contribute to the highly effective learning.

#### **Commentary**

72. Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 are accurate and show very high standards. Current standards in Year 9 are very high and represent excellent achievement because pupils arrive in Year 7 with average standards in this subject. Pupils make rapid progress in Years 7 to 9. Standards seen in Years 10 and 11 are very high and represent excellent and sustained achievement. GCSE results were very high in 2004. Outstanding work is a result of well-focused teaching and very good assessment and target setting. In all areas pupils make particularly good progress as a result of the excellent teaching linked to clear objectives in the GCSE or the National Curriculum programmes of study.
73. Teaching and learning are excellent in all years. Many opportunities are created for pupils to have choices and to make decisions within their own designing and making and this in turn creates motivation and concentration, and promotes higher standards. Independent learning is encouraged giving pupils a sense of ownership as they see their ideas are valued. Homework is a rich area of independent learning and some tasks are e-mailed between pupil and teacher and returned with comments over a weekend. Pupils' capability in ICT is excellent and they all are very competent users of designing software. This in turn enables them to be knowledgeable users of the outstanding computer-aided designing and manufacturing facilities within the department. Many pupils are creative and confident users of these

specialist facilities. They use a rich variety of tools and materials and processes are taught at pace and depth. Many traditional techniques are taught alongside innovative modern processes and help to provide a range of opportunities for the accurate working of materials. Pupils who are talented are given many opportunities for their work to be extended through competitions, industrial links and challenging teaching. Pupils with special educational needs are identified and helped to make good progress across the department, very often finding success, and added confidence, through the use of computer-aided designing to expand their ideas. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and awareness of industrial processes and products. Their expertise is shared with many other local schools and pupils, both at primary and secondary level. Pupils appreciate the warm relationships and mutual respect they have with teachers.

74. Leadership and management of the subject are excellent. The head of department provides visionary leadership and an innovative curriculum. The shared ambition, direction, and energy of all the staff in establishing the subject as a major influence in the school are very positive features of the department. Improvement since the previous inspection has been excellent. Standards, achievement and teaching and learning have all improved. The subject is very well placed for future development and further success.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art and design**

The provision for art and design is **excellent**.

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

- Standards are very high in all years because teachers generate enthusiasm for the subject in pupils.
- Excellent teaching and learning gives pupils a very broad range of quality experiences in art and design.
- Very good leadership and management have raised standards and the subject's profile in the school.

#### **Commentary**

75. The 2004 teachers' assessments show pupils achieve very well to reach well above average standards by the end of Year 9. Drawing skills are highly developed and boys work hard, frequently independently, investigating and successfully combining new ideas with their own designs. Observational drawing, printing, painting, and three-dimensional works are all high quality and show a good depth of investigation and a thorough understanding of the materials and processes used. GCSE results in 2004 were well above average. Current work shows that standards are well above expectations and achievement is very good from when these pupils were in Year 9. Design work is very well researched and three-dimensional work is of a very high standard. A sculpture of a Labrador's head is not only of an exceptional standard but, like a lot of the work, it shows considerable sensitivity in the development and making. Pupils with special educational needs and talented artists achieve very well.
76. Teaching and learning are excellent. Teachers prepare thoroughly and lessons are very well planned to challenge all pupils to do their very best. Pupils experience a broad range of art and design with different teachers through the year. Standards and expectations are consistently very high and pupils respond very well to the challenges the different materials and opportunities give them. Teachers are highly skilled in questioning techniques that motivate and challenge pupils' thinking about their work in progress. Art rooms are stimulating with quality resources and displays of pupils' work.
77. Leadership and management are very good. There is a clear vision for the subject and a constant drive for the very best for the pupils. The department is very well organised and

presents a very positive image. This has successfully raised the profile of the subject in the school and motivated boys to study art and design and do very well. ICT, used very well by the pupils to research, manipulate and communicate, is a developing area for the staff. Very popular art clubs and homework extend and support work in the classroom. Visits to galleries at home and abroad contribute very well to learning outside the school day. There has been a very good improvement since the previous inspection.

## Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' assessments at the end of Year 9 and GCSE results are very high.
- Excellent use is made of ICT and pupils respond very positively to this.
- There is insufficient emphasis on performing within schemes of work.
- Accommodation is cramped and restricts what can be done in lessons.
- Opportunities for pupils to be involved in music making are very good.

### Commentary

78. Teachers' assessments in 2004 were very high. GCSE results in 2004 were very high with all nine candidates achieving grade A\*-B. Standards of work seen are well above national expectations in Years 7 to 9 and very high at GCSE level. Overall achievement is good and at GCSE level is very good. In Years 7 to 9 pupils achieve well because tasks are exciting and relevant, but some lessons lack sufficient challenge for the most able. Ethnic minority pupils are particularly well motivated by the subject and achieve well with many learning to play different musical instruments. At GCSE level pupils achieve very well because all tasks offer the opportunity for the most able to develop at a faster pace while enabling the less experienced musicians to contribute at their level.
79. Overall teaching and learning are good. Teaching is good or better in Years 7 to 9 and very good at GCSE. All teachers have good subject knowledge and are able musicians who present good role models for their pupils. Good teaching is characterised by well-planned tasks that both challenge and reinforce what is already known. Relationships are good resulting in a calm atmosphere that supports learning. Recent changes in the schemes of work have increased motivation resulting in higher numbers of pupils opting for the GCSE course. Activities, including the use of music technology, focus on music that will engage pupils' interest in a wide variety of styles. Homework tasks are an integral part of the programmes of study. However, there is a lack of emphasis throughout the school on developing performing skills and pupils do not appraise this aspect of their own or other pupils' work. Most practical tasks involve group work but the lack of practice space for small groups during lessons limits the possibilities of pupils to fully develop independent learning and ensemble skills. Assessment is good in Years 7 to 9 and very good at GCSE level where work is marked in great detail giving clear individual targets to help pupils understand how they can improve. In the lower years, marking is thorough and encouraging with guidance for developing their work, but pupils are not aware of how they compare with national levels or what they need to do to reach a higher level. A wide range of assessment strategies are employed although performing is only assessed when pupils perform their own compositions. Assessment data is used well to focus on raising future standards.
80. Leadership is very good, with a clear vision for future development including innovative changes in schemes of work. Management is good. There is good teamwork in the department. Well-qualified and enthusiastic teachers support each other and share good practice. Although departmental materials and resources are well organised and displayed, creating a positive atmosphere for learning, there is a lack of office and storage space. The team of instrumental teachers is well managed and supports the work of the department contributing to the high standards that are achieved both in the curriculum and in the extra

curricular activities. Extra-curricular activities involve a high proportion of pupils and develop performing skills further. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. The department has successfully sustained high standards and increased the take-up for the subject at examination level.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

Provision in physical education is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Standards of work are well above average in all years and pupils achieve very well.
- The range and number of extra-curricular activities is excellent.
- Pupils have extremely positive attitudes and excellent relationships with their teachers.
- Excellent leadership and very good management have led to very many improvements.
- Short lessons in Years 9 to 11 restrict teaching and learning.

### **Commentary**

81. Pupils' standards on entry to the school are wide ranging, but are mostly below average, especially in gymnastics and athletics. By the end of Year 9, pupils attain well above average standards in most activities and their achievement is very good. Boys' skills in gymnastics are satisfactory but their games skills are very good as they spend more time on games. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 attain above average standards and achieve very well. They continue to improve their hockey, rugby, football and athletic skills. Presently pupils have no opportunity to study GCSE but the introduction of an examination course at GCSE level is being considered in the school's curriculum review. An A-level course has been very successfully established recently. One reason for pupils' high attainment is that more than half of them are involved in extra-curricular sport. This provides them with many opportunities to play with and against others of similar standards, thus extending their skills and tactical awareness. As part of the thriving extra-curricular programme, many individual pupils and teams attain very high standards in district, county, regional and national competitions in cricket, rugby, football, hockey, rowing and athletics. These talented pupils benefit greatly from the large number of fixtures and tournaments, played in the UK and abroad that are organised by their teachers.
82. Very good teaching and learning, combined with pupils' very enthusiastic attitudes and excellent relationships contribute significantly to pupils' very good achievement. Teachers have excellent subject expertise and provide very good demonstrations on which pupils can model their performance. The 40 minute lessons for pupils in Years 9 to 11 are too short but the time is used well to consolidate the very good learning which takes place in their 80 minute lessons. All pupils in one year are taught games at the same time. This necessitates the use of non-specialist teachers. However, pupils benefit in their learning because teaching groups are mostly made up of pupils of similar ability and lower attaining pupils are taught for part of their course by specialist coaches from local clubs.
83. The head of department provides excellent leadership and very good management of the subject. The department makes a very good contribution to pupils' social, moral and cultural development through the extensive community links with pupils, schools and clubs in this country and abroad. Pupils are assessed very well in lessons and informed about how they can improve but procedures for recording National Curriculum levels are at an early stage of development. Excellent improvements have been made since the previous inspection. Pupils are very enthusiastic, standards have risen, teaching is very good and the department has established an excellent ethos for learning.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

## **Business studies**

Provision in business studies is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers use their excellent knowledge to promote high quality learning and GCSE results are very high.
- Excellent procedures for assessment help pupils to learn.
- A broad range of teaching methods engage pupils actively in their learning.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes and want to learn.
- Pupils are motivated by the use of ICT to enhance the presentation of their work.

### **Commentary**

84. GCSE examination results are very high and amongst the highest in school. The number of pupils attaining the highest grades has been consistently well above average in recent years. Achievement is excellent. Pupils enjoy business studies and want to learn, they have mature and responsible attitudes and the very good working relationship with their teachers enhances pupils' achievement. Pupils capitalise on the opportunity to work independently, for example, using computers to produce a high quality newsletter describing what they learned on a recent visit to a newspaper printing company. All pupils participate very well in group-work to build an understanding of communication in business.
85. Teaching and learning are excellent. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and use an extensive range of effective activities to enthuse and engage pupils. Teachers have very high expectations of all pupils and support is focussed very effectively on pupils with special educational needs and those who are gifted and talented, thus enabling all pupils to make excellent progress. Homework is well designed to enhance and develop learning in lessons. Work is marked frequently and the very high quality feedback to pupils helps them build on their performance and improve their work.
86. Leadership and management are very good. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. There is a continuous drive for improvement. The review of each year's work is thorough, strengths and weaknesses are identified and solutions are sought in order to raise standards further. Data on pupils' prior attainment is used very well for setting and reviewing the challenging targets for individual success. Pupils' progress is continuously monitored to ensure the highest standards are maintained. Pupils make very good use of computers to widen their research and present information effectively.

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

The main teaching of citizenship is done through a personal and social development course that includes health education. Citizenship is a very strong element of this course.

### **Citizenship**

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The subject is taught very well within a personal development course.
- The school provides many extra-curricular opportunities for pupils to develop the skills of active citizenship.
- Management is effective within the personal development course but cross-curricular monitoring is not in place.
- Assessment lacks rigour and pupils' attainment and progress in the subject is not being reported to parents.

## Commentary

87. Standards are well above expectations by Year 9 and achievement is good. Pupils gain a good understanding of the political process and how citizens can influence decision makers. They are knowledgeable about human rights issues and the ethical aspects of consumer choice. The level of discussion in lessons is high and pupils put across their views effectively. They research issues well for homework. It was not possible to observe citizenship lessons in Year 11 and the available evidence for judging standards was limited. Pupils' personal development books provide only a log of their studies, which show continued but reduced coverage of citizenship topics over the two years. Very good practice was seen in a Year 10 chemistry lessons. Pupils displayed advanced skills in using evidence to investigate ethical issues surrounding a controversial award of the Nobel Prize for chemistry. Pupils are well informed of current affairs and display responsible attitudes indicative of above average attainment and good achievement in citizenship skills.
88. Very good opportunities exist for pupils to develop the skills of active citizenship through participation in the extensive programme of extra-curricular activities. The lower school council and the eco-council are highly active bodies that are well supported by pupils in Years 7 to 9. A year council has just been introduced in Year 10 but not yet in Year 11. Pupils' response to the Tsunami appeal and their general involvement in charitable fund-raising is highly commendable. Pupils display a strong sense of responsibility for their actions and a readiness to serve others. The indicators are that pupils' attainment in active citizenship is very good.
89. Teaching in the citizenship lessons observed was very good overall. Specialist teachers have a good command of the subject, plan thoroughly and have high expectations to maximise learning in the 35-minute lessons. It is barely enough time to introduce a topic and proceed to study in depth. Relations and class management are highly effective in creating the right climate for discussion and an investigative approach to learning, backed by homework research. There is little formal assessment of pupils' attainment in the subject, only pupils' self-assessment at the end of a topic.
90. Leadership and management of the subject are good within the personal development programme. Schemes of work are well organised and teachers are well deployed, using their specialist knowledge to best effect. Co-ordination of cross-curricular provision is less successful. Departmental contributions have been audited but there has been little monitoring of the planned programme's actual implementation. The citizenship strand of enquiry and communication is being well developed in discussion but not through written assignments. There is a lot of paperwork for pupils to assess their own work but its use is neither consistent nor validated by teachers' assessment. The subject is not being reported to parents in each year, which is a statutory requirement. New line management is lending strong support and plans are in place to remedy these deficiencies.

## SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

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

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
Biology	11	81.8	60.6	18.2	9.9	30.9	18.7
Business studies	6	83.3	75.2	16.7	14.7	26.7	25.2
Chemistry	8	50.0	68.2	25.0	12.3	18.8	22.1
Economics	4	100.0	69.5	25.0	16.8	40.0	24.6
English	5	100.0	83.3	0.0	14.7	32.0	27.7
English literature	2	100.0	82.6	0.0	16.1	35.0	28.0
French	1	100.0	78.9	100.0	19.3	50.0	28.0
Design and technology	2	100.0	68.1	0.0	10.0	20.0	21.7
General studies	19	78.9	71.5	5.3	15.0	26.8	24.3
Geography	4	100.0	72.6	50.0	17.1	45.0	25.0
German	2	100.0	80.7	50.0	18.1	50.0	28.2
History	4	100.0	80.5	50.0	17.5	37.5	27.7
Information technology	5	100.0	64.9	20.0	8.1	40.0	20.0
Mathematics	22	54.5	55.7	13.6	11.9	17.3	18.6
Psychology	9	66.7	64.2	22.2	11.1	23.3	20.9
Physics	11	81.8	62.0	0.0	11.0	23.6	20.0
Sociology	10	100.0	70.0	60.0	16.5	50.0	24.2
Sports science	1	100.0	70.3	0.0	9.0	40.0	21.2

**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	15	100.0	97.4	86.7	42.7	101.3	82.0
Biology	33	93.9	95.8	51.5	36.1	81.8	76.0
Business studies	32	100.0	98.7	68.8	37.6	93.8	80.8
Chemistry	33	100.0	97.2	51.5	47.5	87.3	83.9
Economics	16	100.0	98.7	75.0	52.6	93.8	88.7
English	22	100.0	99.2	36.4	34.7	78.2	79.7
English literature	12	100.0	99.4	58.3	45.3	96.7	85.3
French	7	100.0	98.6	85.7	53.3	108.6	88.6
Design and technology	23	95.7	97.0	60.9	29.0	92.2	73.8
General studies	43	97.7	94.2	60.5	29.5	93.0	71.6
Geography	34	100.0	98.5	67.6	41.2	97.1	82.0
German	7	100.0	98.5	42.9	50.3	85.7	86.0
History	30	100.0	99.0	56.7	42.4	92.7	83.3
Information technology	8	100.0	95.7	50.0	24.9	95.0	70.0
Mathematics	24	100.0	96.5	79.2	55.5	102.5	88.7
Music	2	100.0	97.6	50.0	33.7	80.0	77.1
Psychology	44	90.9	96.6	36.4	36.2	74.1	77.3
Physics	36	91.7	96.4	44.4	43.8	77.8	81.5
Sociology	11	100.0	98.1	63.6	39.2	94.5	80.8
Sports science	10	100.0	97.7	60.0	24.8	92.0	71.6

## **ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION**

Provision in English is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teachers have very good knowledge of the subject.
- Students are very well prepared for public examinations.
- Students' attitudes to their studies are excellent.
- Thorough assessment helps students to improve the standard of their work.

### **Commentary**

91. Results in the 2004 A-level English literature examinations were well above the national average. The standards of work seen during the inspection are well above expectations. Achievement is very good. Marks for coursework at the end of Year 13 have consistently been amongst the best nationally, and students' work shows strong evidence of original thought. The proportion of students gaining the highest grades is well above the average.
92. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers know their texts very well, and develop very wide background information to support students' study. Very good lessons are planned with a range of activities to ensure that concentration is maintained in the longer double lesson. In some lessons a more traditional approach tends to engage students less in their learning. In very good lessons teachers use very good targeted questioning to challenge students to think and deepen their knowledge and understanding. Students are expected to think for themselves. Support for the development of coursework is very good and subsequent results are very good. Students appreciate the support they receive from their teachers, and develop very effective working relationships with them. Students are productive and complete work in preparation for lessons. They are interested in their work and sustain concentration even when the work is very challenging. They confidently share their views with others and with their teachers. There is a very positive working atmosphere in lessons. Assessment is very good. Teachers have very good knowledge of examination and assessment criteria. Objectives for assessment are shared with students and regularly reinforced during teaching. Students receive comprehensive feedback on their work that is related to assessment objectives. They have written information from their teachers and are clear on what they need to do to achieve the grades to which they aspire.
93. Leadership and management are very good. There is a clear vision of what should happen in the department to continue to raise standards. From 2004, the department is offering only one course at A-level to overcome the difficulties of staffing English language. The number of teachers involved in teaching English literature has been increased, thus widening the range of texts that are being studied. There is very good support in place for teachers who are new to teaching in the sixth form, and plans are in place to include the joint scrutiny of sixth form work to further develop their expertise. The number of students taking English in the sixth form has increased significantly in the last three years. Improvement since the previous inspection is good because high standards have been maintained and students continue to achieve very well.

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

94. Standards of literacy in the sixth form are very high and contribute to the very good achievement of students in public examinations. Oral skills of students are very strong as a result of the wide range of opportunities available to them for interaction with each other and with adults in the school. There is good practice in many subjects. There is very strong support given to students on how to write essays of a high standard in English, history and design and technology.

## Modern foreign languages

Provision in French is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The relationships between teachers and students are excellent.
- Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject and of current issues.
- Teachers use materials from the French media very well.
- Students do not have enough opportunity to use their independent learning skills.

### Commentary

95. The standards of work seen in Years 12 and 13 are very high compared to what is expected. Students' grades in French in 2004 were very high. This is a very good achievement, since students join the course in Year 12 with above average grades at GCSE. It also represents good improvement since the previous inspection.
96. Very good achievement is a direct result of very good teaching. Teachers use a wide variety of up-to-date materials from France, including newspaper and television reports and songs that are interesting to the students and often very challenging. Students understand the material because of teachers' very good knowledge of complex linguistic and cultural issues. Because of the high level of trust between teachers and students that arises from the excellent relationships in the classroom, students feel secure enough to admit difficulty and learn effectively. The atmosphere in lessons enables students to communicate freely in French and reach a high level of competence. Marking of students' work is very thorough and is very well used to tell students how they are doing and enables them to check their progress against A-level criteria. Students also enjoy working independently and act on their teachers' advice to subscribe to French magazines, watch films and listen to music in French in their spare time. This work, too, is recognised and marked regularly by their teachers. However, in lessons too little time is allowed for students to use the independent skills they have acquired to exchange views and explore issues fully through discussion and debate.
97. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department is energetic and has a very clear vision for the subject. The department is very well supported by extremely thorough monitoring that helps teachers to share their practice. All students have opportunities to take part in work experience in France, giving them an invaluable linguistic and cultural experience. There has been a good improvement in the quality of teaching since the previous inspection and this is reflected in higher standards and higher achievement. There has been an excellent improvement, however, in the use of ICT to support students' learning.

## MATHEMATICS

A-level mathematics was inspected in detail and further mathematics was sampled. Results in further mathematics have been excellent, with almost all students achieving A grades. One lesson was observed and teaching, learning and achievement were all very good.

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Standards are well above average and have risen in recent years. Students achieve very well.
- Students are exceptionally well prepared for examinations by very knowledgeable teachers.
- Very good teaching strategies enable students to develop as confident and self-reliant learners.
- Students' progress is carefully monitored and extra support is provided to individuals.
- Students rarely explore mathematics beyond the requirements of the examination syllabus, nor use ICT.

### Commentary

98. Results in A-level examinations in 2004 were well above average and continue a trend of steadily rising results. Standards of work seen are also well above average in all aspects of the subject. Students show high levels of knowledge and can use techniques they have learned to solve problems. Highest attainers confidently handle complex concepts. Students achieve very well.
99. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers have excellent mathematical knowledge and fully understand examination board requirements. Students are exceptionally well prepared for their module tests, through demonstration, textbook examples and past paper practice. Students take considerable responsibility for their own learning, using their teachers as a resource to help them and for discussions. Students are given topics to research and “teach” their peers. They also present model answers as a stimulus to discussion. They are articulate, confident and prepared to persevere and learn from their mistakes. Extra classes help some students make the transition from GCSE to advanced level study. Some students are enabled to study different modules through supported self-study, thus giving them a degree of choice. Students value the accessibility of their teachers to help them when they need advice. Teachers challenge as well as support so that students’ thinking is extended. Students focus almost exclusively on their examination syllabus and rarely read, research or experiment with mathematics beyond this. They hardly ever use ICT to explore or present mathematical ideas, despite them having high levels of skill seen in other subjects.
100. Leadership and management are very good. Due attention is given to planning and monitoring of the subject. There is a team of experienced teachers who work well together to secure high standards. Students’ work is monitored regularly and they get feedback on how to improve. Improvement since the previous inspection has been very good. Results, achievement, teaching and leadership have all improved.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

101. Students’ mathematical thinking is well applied in their other subjects. In geography, they routinely use complex statistical techniques to compare and interpret different sets of data. In design and technology they program computer aided design equipment, while in chemistry they undertake complex calculations involving logarithms. All students have a good level of mathematical understanding from their GCSE work that supports their learning in all subjects.

## **SCIENCE**

The focus of the inspection was on chemistry, but biology and physics were also sampled. Two lessons of physics were observed. Both were good. Independent learning skills were very good. Standards are improving and are now satisfactory. One very good biology lesson was observed in Year 13. The teacher used very good subject knowledge to capture the interest of the students and supported them in developing their independent learning skills. In 2004 results in biology were well above average.

### **Chemistry**

Provision in chemistry is **very good**.

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

- Teaching and learning are very good because very good planning engages the interest of the pupils.
- Exam results have steadily improved and are well above average
- The high quality leadership of the new head of department has helped to improve teaching and ensure that standards continue to rise.
- There are not yet sufficient opportunities for students to complete extended writing tasks and engage in independent research.

## Commentary

102. Results for 2004 were well above average, and results have risen consistently over the last three years. Value added data indicates that students' achievement is very good and that teaching is having a positive effect on learning. Standards of work seen in lessons are well above expectations for students in Years 12 and 13.
103. Teaching and learning are very good. All lessons seen were good or better and two thirds of them were very good. Lessons are carefully planned and well structured. Teaching is motivating and makes good use of a variety of approaches that have a positive effect on students' learning and promote achievement. However, there is insufficient use of extended writing tasks or opportunities for students to relate their knowledge and understanding of chemistry to real life situations. Teachers ensure that students build on their previous knowledge and understanding when introducing new concepts and ideas. Teachers have high expectations of students and students respond very well. Students readily work independently, take responsibility for their work and show determination and commitment. Marking does not take advantage of this as there is not enough written feedback to help students take responsibility for improving their work. There are excellent relationships between teachers and students and a very positive and supportive learning climate within the department.
104. Leadership and management are very good. The head of department is dedicated to ensuring the highest possible standards. Assessment data is used to monitor student progress. Students who are underachieving are identified and given the necessary support. All students have an individual action plan, which identifies agreed actions students should undertake to help them attain their target grade. The head of department has a clear vision for the department shared by all staff. She is an excellent role model for other staff in the department. Improvement since the previous inspection is good because teaching, learning, leadership and management have all improved.

## HUMANITIES

### History

Provision in history is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have excellent subject knowledge.
- Relationships between staff and students are excellent.
- The department makes excellent use of ICT to support learning.
- Students are very well supported with examination techniques and the use of model answers.

## Commentary

105. Results at both AS and A-level were very high in 2004. All students who were entered for the A-level examination in Year 13 gained a pass grade, and over half the students gained the higher grades A and B. Results show an improving trend and are better than expected from students' GCSE results. Standards in the current Years 12 and 13 are very high. All students have an excellent knowledge and understanding across the topics studied. They analyse historical sources critically and evaluate a wide range of evidence effectively to produce well-balanced arguments. Achievement is very good. Students of all abilities and all ethnic backgrounds achieve equally well. This is because of very good teaching, very good support with examination techniques and the excellent attitudes of the students.
106. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers are very enthusiastic and have excellent subject knowledge. Lessons are well organised, with very good strategies and resources that promote very good learning. Teachers give high quality explanations and provide challenging

questions to extend students' understanding of the subject matter. Teachers make excellent use of ICT Power Point presentations. This lecture style approach prepares the students well for their further studies when they leave school. Marking of students' work is very good giving them good guidance on how to improve. They have very good guidance on examination techniques and marking criteria. This enables them to apply their subject knowledge well. Relationships in lessons are excellent and students demonstrate excellent attitudes to learning. Learning is purposeful but also enjoyable. Students are attentive and work effectively, both independently and collaboratively.

107. Leadership and management of history are very good. Teamwork is a very good feature in planning and teaching. Leadership of the curriculum and teaching is very good. Members of the department are excellent role models for students. Very good use is made of performance data for target setting and for tracking the progress of students. Courses are enhanced by residential visits to Europe. These visits help to develop very good attitudes to learning and promote excellent relationships between students and staff. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good.

## **Geography**

Provision in geography is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Very good leadership and management result in a department characterised by very high aspirations and very high expectations of students.
- Very knowledgeable and challenging teaching results in students achieving very well.
- Relationships are relaxed and very positive and stem from mutual respect.
- The use of ICT is presently underdeveloped.

## **Commentary**

108. Examination results at A and AS level were well above average in 2004 and over two thirds of students gained the highest A-level grades. These results represent very good achievement for the students concerned who attained higher grades in geography than in most other subjects they took. Standards of work seen are well above expectations and students are achieving very well. Students research, select and present information logically in order to explain more complex geographical topics.
109. Students achieve very well because teaching and learning are consistently very good. Teachers are very knowledgeable and ask very probing questions that extend all students understanding of the subject very well. Students respond very well to the challenging teaching they receive and have excellent attitudes to learning. Classroom relationships are very good and lessons are conducted in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. Work is closely tailored to A-level examination requirements so students acquire the skills and knowledge they need to reach the highest standards. High quality fieldwork enriches the A-level course but ICT is not yet used fully to support teaching and learning.
110. The leadership and management of the department are very good. There is a clear vision to ensure that a balance is kept between maintaining current standards and embracing new ideas to secure further improvement. The department works very well collaboratively and all staff have high aspirations for, and high expectations of, their students.
111. Improvement since the previous inspection is very good because well above average standards have been maintained and an increased proportion of students gain the higher A-level grades. The department has both the capacity and commitment to improve even further.

## **ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY AND MANUFACTURING**

### **Design and technology**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning are excellent and achievement is excellent as a result.
- Students feel that their views and ideas are valued, and also challenged in a supportive atmosphere that enables them to produce products of exceptional standard.
- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge and the close match of work to the examination requirements lead to very high standards.
- Computer-aided designing and manufacture is outstanding and extends the learning opportunities of all students.

### **Commentary**

112. 2004 A-level results show standards to be very high with over twice the national figure gaining the higher grades of A and B. Standards seen in the three subjects of electronics, systems and control and product design are very high and represent excellent achievement as a result of very good planning, and the excellent subject knowledge of the teachers. 2004 AS results indicate similar very high standards but from a very small group of students.
113. Teaching and learning are excellent. Excellent attitudes and behaviour contribute to the warm, positive and challenging atmosphere that exists within the department. Students are mature, positive and work hard. They enjoy the mature way that teaching staff treat them, returning for extra work during their study periods and after school. Teachers have very high expectations and challenge students to do better, often leading to further detailed work and escalating research. This results in products of exceptionally high quality. Many students use the established links with the local university for very advanced computer aided designing and manufacturing. One student recently produced three-dimensional models from computer images which helped him become the winner of the national Young Engineer competition. Well-focussed lessons enable students to understand the assessment criteria and the requirements of the examination specification very well. They all enjoy the freedom and choices that this course offers. They feel that it is their ideas that are the prime starting point for projects and this helps create positive ownership of their work and studies. Students show commitment, concentration, energy and creative awareness that enable them to be very independent learners. Computer-aided designing and manufacture is outstanding within the department, and many students design and use "state of the art" precision computer controlled milling machines independently and successfully. Students are very articulate and designing is strongly individual in their project work. The students know their weaknesses and their strengths through very good assessments of their work and targeted guidance on how to improve.
114. The leadership and management of the department are excellent. Improvement since the previous inspection has been excellent with improvements in standards, achievement and teaching and learning. The courses are very well placed for future development and further success.

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

### **Art and design**

The provision for art and design is **excellent**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students make very good progress from GCSE to achieve very well in the sixth form.
- Excellent teaching and learning give students quality experiences and heighten their sensitivity to art and design.

### **Commentary**

115. A-level results in 2004 were well above average, as they were in 2003. In 2004 student numbers increased and high standards were maintained. Students achieved very well, making very good progress from GCSE work. Standards seen during the inspection continue to be well above expectations with many examples of the highest standards.
116. Teaching and learning are excellent. Students respond to the teachers' high expectations and are very attentive and on task. A very good range of materials and contexts develop their expressive abilities. The style of teachers' questions encourages connections to be made between their own work and that of other artists and designers, especially those well known locally. First hand experiences are encouraged and the impact on students' work is considerable. A very well planned life drawing session set students a range of very exacting and timed challenges. In the sculpture lesson that followed, the improvements in drawing skills and in their better understanding of the female form was excellent. Students are successfully encouraged to take more responsibility for their own learning. They access and selectively use information from a very wide range of sources to inform their images and three-dimensional work. Portfolios are very well presented and contain in depth research often relevantly linked to world issues. The standard of written work is very high both in range and content. The sensitivity these students show in their subject material, research work and when discussing their projects, is extremely high. Displays of large works around the school are very graphic portrayals of some very sensitive issues that are deeply moving.
117. Leadership and management are very good. There is a clear vision for the subject that includes the use of a wide range of experiences to support the development of artistic flair. There is an excellent programme for learning outside the school day which includes gallery visits, collaboration with other schools and a local college, open gallery days, work placements in primary schools and commissioned work for the new sports facilities. Students benefit from courses that are very well planned, taught and monitored and ensure they fulfil their potential.

## **BUSINESS**

### **Business studies**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Advanced level examination results are very high.
- Students achieve very well because of their positive attitudes and the very good teaching.
- Business studies continually improves because of the very good leadership and management.
- Assessment is used very effectively to set targets, track progress and focus support.
- Year 12 students learn from active involvement in the Young Enterprise programme.

### **Commentary**

118. Standards of work are very high. In 2003 results were very high but improved even further in 2004. Advanced level results in business studies are very high compared with similar schools. Over two-thirds of students achieved the highest A/B grades, and very high numbers achieved grade C. AS level results are above average overall.

119. Achievement is good in Year 13, and very good in Year 12. Year 13 students use their independent learning skills well to research into external influences on monetary policy, and present their findings to their class so that all benefit from broadening knowledge. A small number of Year 13 students engage well in debate but some students do not participate fully although their very good listening skills enables them to build on their prior learning. In lessons Year 12 students have excellent attitudes. They are very keen to work hard especially when carrying out a role-play of appraisal interviews on their peers. Students reflect well on their performance, and this helps raise achievement. Year 12 students also run a small company in school through the Young Enterprise programme, and students apply business theory to make decisions. These students transfer skills and knowledge to business studies lessons, which help them make very good progress.
120. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers use their other management roles, previous experience and interests, to bring the world of business effectively into lessons. A wide range of teaching methods motivates students and ensures learning is maximised. Questioning and extra challenge are used very well to ensure all students develop higher level thinking skills. Students use computers to widen their research and present information effectively. Marking is excellent. Teachers provide detailed guidance to help students reflect and improve their work.
121. Leadership and management are very good. There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. There is a continuous drive for improvement. The review of each year's work is thorough, strengths and weaknesses are identified and solutions are sought in order to raise standards further. Data on students' prior attainment is used very well for setting and reviewing the challenging targets for each student's success. Students' progress is continuously monitored to ensure the highest standards are maintained.

## 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>2</b>	<b>2</b>
How inclusive the school is		1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2	2
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	2	2

<b>Overall standards achieved</b>		<b>2</b>
Pupils' achievement	2	2

<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>		<b>1</b>
Attendance	2	1
Attitudes	1	1
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1	1
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		1

<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>		<b>2</b>
The quality of teaching	2	2
How well pupils learn	2	2
The quality of assessment	1	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		1
Accommodation and resources	3	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety		2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	1	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	1	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	3

<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>		<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	2	2
The leadership of the headteacher		1
The leadership of other key staff	2	2
The effectiveness of management	2	2

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

